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N. Haughton.

AN

EXPOSITION

ON

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

OF THE

Prophet Hosea,

WHEREIN

ARE DISPLAYED, THE ABOUNDINGS AND SUPERABOUNDINGS

OF THE GRACE OF GOD,

Toward and upon the Election of Grace,

WHO HAVING BACKSLIDDEN FROM HIM,

ARE CALLED UPON TO RETURN.



The Lord puts words into their mouths; he hears and answers the same: and further prevents them with the blessings of his goodness.—He promising to be unto them as "dew."—To work a glorious renovation in them, so that they shall "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine;" shall be in a flourishing condition; and be firmly rooted and established in Christ.—Their beauty in Him shall be as "the olive tree:" green, fruitful, and large; their smell and fragrancy as "Lebanon," so that such as repair unto them shall find refreshment.—The re-converted, under these influences of free-grace, shall renounce all their former sins and false dependencies.—God expresses his notice and attention to their prayers, and that he would so work in them, as that they should both will and do that which should be acceptable in his sight:—all which would be profitable to others to see and contemplate.

THE WHOLE CHAPTER SERMONIZED.

BY SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

At Printers' Court, Shoe Lane, Fleet Street.

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you."

JER. iii, 14.

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NINE SERMONS

ON THE

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OF

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I WOULD SUBJOIN THE FOLLOWING

PREFATORY REMARKS.

TAKE the Chapter before us, and it will be found to embrace several distinct parts, or subjects, under which are comprised the following particulars.

1. We have the Lord's address to Israel, his reason for it, with his advice unto them; together with the provision he had made for them, in a form of prayer which he had drawn up for their use: all which was agreeable to his own heart and will concerning them. This is contained in the first, second, and third verses of the chapter here before us.

What I should style a Second Part of the same, is in the fourth verse, which is an answer to the prayer contained in the second and third verses.

The Third Part begins at the fifth verse, with a most comprehensive promise, which extends to the close of the eighth verse.

The Fourth Part commences at the ninth verse, and ends there.

I have only to add hereunto, that in my weak and low apprehension, this outline being attended unto, you have an opening into each particular, and the grand subject of the whole. I am small, and of no reputation; yet, I really desire no other situation in the church of the living God. It is "by the grace of God I am what I am." So far as he may be pleased to enable me, and to make use of me, I am heartily desirous to be employed in his work and service. And if he is pleased to reject me, and my service, I am most truly willing to be employed, or rejected, just as seemeth good in his sight. As I am well-pleased with his having loved me with an everlasting love; and that as one with Christ, and he being one with me, he will never leave me nor forsake me. I love the person of Christ; I love the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ; I love his interest in the world; I love his church, his gospel, his ordinances, his people, in their respective places and circum-

stances: some of them are in high repute, some of them in very low estimation; some are very greatly distinguished by their spiritual attainments in the school of Christ, for their growth into him, and for their attachment unto, and cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart. And some of the Lord's beloved ones are always the objects of pity and compassion, on account of their propensity in heart and affection to backslide from him. I love these as truly as I do any of the most eminent of the saints; yet I do not love them *for* their backslidings, but because the Lord hath loved them with an everlasting love.

I hope that whoever reads the following Discourses, will have no reason to complain, and say, here, in such and such a line or page, there is a palliation of, and a conniving at sin, and making very light of it. Yet I hope it will be fully evidenced, and made known to all such as know the Lord, that where sin hath abounded, or doth still abound, in any of the vessels of mercy, the grace of God superabounds; so as sin reigneth unto death, even so grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The substance of these Discourses was delivered

on several Wednesday evenings, at the Chapel in Printers' Court, Shoe Lane, and are now transcribed from memory, and set before the eye of the public, hoping as they found acceptance then, they may also now. Leaving all this with the Lord alone, and looking unto him for his blessing,

I subscribe myself,

A real lover of Christ and his Church,

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

Aged Seventy-five years.

Brixton Chapel, March 31, 1821.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER OF HOSEA;

OR,

The Fourteenth Chapter of Hosea Sermonized.

SERMON I.

HOSEA XIV, v. 1.

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

THE prophecy, of which this is the last chapter, concerned the Ten Tribes of Israel, who had broken off from the house of *David*, under the influence of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who taught Israel to sin; and some parts of it belong to the people of Judah. Some conceive the prophet prophesied for the space of seventy years. His name *Hosea*, or, *Hosheah*, is the same with *Oshea*, or *Joshua*, whom *Moses* called *Jehoshua*, which is by some interpreted, *the Essence saving*; or, *the salvation of the Lord*. Our prophet must have been cotemporary with Isaiah. His name also signifies *the salvation of the Lord*. Hosea

prophesied under the reigns of *Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz,* and *Hezekiah,* kings of Judah; and under the reign of Jeroboam, second king of Israel, and his successors, to the destruction of Samaria, under a king of the same name with himself. The general parts of the prophecy concern the kingdom of Israel by itself—See chap. i, and ii. The kingdom of Judah by itself—chap. iii. And both kingdoms jointly, in the succeeding chapters. These are interspersed with various threatenings of national and impending judgments, which would come upon them for their profaneness, and horrid impieties. Their sins are particularly enumerated. The way in which the Lord would execute his fierce wrath upon them is expressed; and a mixture of judgment and mercy is most graciously expressed, to encourage such as might be seeking the Lord, to hope in him for his pardoning mercy, to be exercised towards them. Some promises also are given concerning their deliverance from captivity. Many passages in it refer to Christ. His resurrection and victory over death are most triumphantly expressed, and the whole book is closed with a declaration that God will pardon their sins, and this in answer to their prayers; that he will receive them graciously, and love them freely; that he will shed his Spirit on them; that a glorious change shall be effected in them; that they shall be established, enlarged, made beautiful and glorious, a sweet

smell to others, that such as join them shall find the benefit thereof; they shall revive as the corn; they shall renounce all their former sins and self dependencies; God will hear their prayers, he will observe them: then the whole is concluded by declaring that spiritual wisdom and prudence consist, in having a knowledge of the ways of the Lord, to saints the right apprehension of the same is a delight; but to the wicked, they are a stumbling block. Thus I have given you a general outline of what is contained in the chapter before us, the total fulfilment of which will not be accomplished, until the restoration of the Jews, and the reinstatement of them in their own land in the latter day. I proceed to open and explain the words before me: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

These words are spoken by the Lord God. They were spoken by him to backsliding Israel. They are spoken in rich mercy, and are full of rich and sovereign grace. They are expressive of the bowels of God's mercy. They are spoken to some sinners in the worst case and state of mind in which they could be placed, or under any consideration be in. There is no case so sinfully extreme, as that of backsliding from the Lord. None but the Lord himself can give encouragement to such to hope in his mercy. Here the Lord is pleased to utter forth his glorious voice

to his people, let their cases of sin and guilt be what they may. He is pleased, most graciously pleased, to give this as the reason for so doing: *For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* Backsliders want encouragement to return to the Lord. None know their hearts, cases, frames, and feeling, so as to be capable to speak fully to their satisfaction but the Lord himself. It is not all who preach, that can so express themselves in their ministry, as to set forth Christ as he is revealed in the word, and so declare the thing as it is; that they shall be the very means, if the Lord please, of removing every hindrance out of the way, so as a sinner, with the full knowledge of the whole contained in his sinfulness and guilt, and in the clear apprehensions of Christ, as set forth ministerially, may close with Christ, and receive him freely and fully, as the complete salvation of God. Neither are all the Lord's ministers suited to preach Christ to all sorts, and kind of sinful cases, which befal the children of the most high God; neither are all these, each, and every one of them, suited alike to feed, direct, and build up, the Lord's called people on their most holy faith. It pleases the Lord to give to all, and each of his ministering servants, the gifts and graces, severally as he will. So says the Apostle. *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there*

are differences of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 1 Cor. chap. xii, ver. 4—6. It is the royal prerogative of the Lord God alone, to speak in the person of his co-essential Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the medium of the Scriptures, by the grace and influence of the eternal Spirit, to all his called ones, and that so particularly, and expressly to their cases, as is expressive of his heart towards them. In the words before us, we have a proof of this. The words are good and comfortable. They contain an address, which is to Israel his people. They are in a sinful case, and are in appearance insensible of the same. They are fallen into sad circumstances. Because it is even thus with them, it is here written: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

In my sermonizing these words I will cast my subject into the following order, and set the same before you, as contained in these particulars, hoping it may be the more advantageous for your memories, and the retention of the discourse.

First—We have here the Lord's address unto his backsliding ones. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.*

Secondly—One substantial reason for so doing: their relation to the Lord their God. He was their God, and they were his people. *Return unto the Lord thy God.*

Thirdly—What their present case was; and this is mentioned to hasten their return unto the Lord their God; *for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* I shall aim to go through each of these particulars. May the Lord be present with me, and guide me through the same, so that it may, through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, be beneficial to the church and people of God. According to the proposed plan, I proceed thus: and shall first attempt to open this part of my text, expressed in these words: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.*

It contains an address from the Lord unto Israel. It may be considered that we may understand by the term Israel, the Ten Tribes which revolted from the house of *David,* under the reign of *Rehoboam,* the son of *Solomon,* under the influence of *Jeroboam,* the son of *Nebat,* who became the king of the Ten Tribes: these are commonly stiled the Israelites, or the children of Ephraim, to distinguish them from the two tribes and a half, who continued fast and firm to the house of *David,* and acknowledged his descendants to be their lawful sovereigns, and who also continued, for the most part, to the worship the Lord God had prescribed, and commanded them by his servant *Moses.* The Ten Tribes were remarkable for their apostacy from God; they were all of them idolaters; yet the Lord, again and again, sent his prophets to reclaim them. It may

be the whole of this chapter is a prophecy of the restoration of the people of the Jews, and Israel of God in the latter day; *when the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.* Zephaniah, chap. iii, ver. 9. Be it so: yet, doubtless, we may make use of the same for our use, comfort, and encouragement. The Lord's elect, even the people whom he hath formed for his praise, and brought nigh unto himself by effectual calling, if left one moment to themselves, are prone to backslide from him, the fountain of living waters, and to hew out to themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water. There is a sovereign and marvellous display of the Lord's grace towards his people, both before calling, and after calling; some of them are permitted to sin most grievously in their unconverted state, whilst some of them, in the very same state, are wonderfully preserved; and some of them, after conversion, have awfully fallen into some most horrible impieties, whilst others of them are preserved, so as never to sin willingly against their consciences, from their first convictions, to the very close of their lives. This reminds me of Dr. Goodwin's observation, that God glorifies his sanctifying grace in some, and his pardoning grace in others. Let the children of God be in what state they may, as it respects their acts of grace or sin, this makes no alteration

in the Lord's love unto them; they are as he loved them in Christ, and chose them in Christ, and accepted them in Christ, and blessed them in Christ, always in his sight, immutably one and the same; so they are, as saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, the same before the Lord at all times: and as the called of God in Christ, are one and the same, they having the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, yet as they have the body of sin and death dwelling within them, there is a continual propensity in their fallen natures, to slide into themselves; to backslide from the Lord Jesus Christ; to give way to themselves; to fall by their own inherent corruptions; and thus backslide from the Lord their God. The Lord says of Israel, to whom he sent his word by *Hosea: And my people are bent to backsliding from me, though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him.* Hosea, chap. xi, ver. 7. As the whole of this prophecy was delivered to a whole nation of backsliders, and even to such as may most justly be denominated the very worst of them; so I conceive we may from thence derive great support, for the worst of cases the Lord's called people may possibly be in: seeing he says to such, *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* Israel's case was extreme. He could not return unto the Lord by any strength of his own. His mind oppressed with guilt, must be

filled with every discouragement. He must be fallen by his iniquity into a state and kind of desperation. This was the fruit of his iniquity. The words of the text contain, and imply all this. Yet they are the only remedy for him. It is the Lord himself that here speaks. He it is who here addresses *Israel.* He does it in the language of commiseration. *O Israel,* (this is very benign and affectionate) I know thy case. I feel for thee. I compassionate thy case, and am still what I ever was: *the Lord thy God.* Thou art fallen by thine iniquity, and from which thou canst not extricate thyself. I can deliver thee; therefore hear what I say unto thee. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* From these words, what an infinity of grace, and blessed encouragement may be derived, so as to encourage the people of the Lord to trust and hope in him. Of all cases which can befal the Lord's people, backsliding is the worst; this all must acknowledge, whether they have had the awful, and sad experience of it or not. None can backslide from the Lord but such as have known the Lord. There must be an external, or an internal knowledge of the Lord, or there cannot be a backsliding from him. It is true all mankind may be said to be backsliders, in consequence of their fall and apostacy from God, by the transgression of the first man; yet that is not the immediate subject of the text,

nor of our present consideration. Take in the immediate instance referred to, it concerns such as had made a profession of God, of his truth, of his worship, of his laws, of his covenant, of his prophets: all these they were departed from. They therefore were backsliders. They are charged by the Lord with having slidden back by a perpetual backsliding. Jeremiah, chap. viii. ver. 5. So such only, I conceive, may be properly stiled backsliders, as have either made a legal profession of Christ, and through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, have renounced it, and have given up their profession of the holy name whereby they have been called, or such of the Lord's people who have fallen into actual transgression, whose hearts and affections are thereby removed from the Lord. The former of these fall off from their profession of Christ; all which never sprang from a true knowledge of Christ. The others though the root of the matter was in them, yet have fallen from the steadfastness of their faith in Christ, and into actual sin, and hereby given cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Whilst I do not intend to enter into all the particulars of a backsliding state and case; yet I may comprehend all that is needful for us to know of the same. The subject before us calls for this: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* If Israel had not

fallen from the Lord God, there would have been no propriety in the address. Israel is addressed as fallen by her iniquity; in consequence of which she was estranged from the Lord. Many of the Lord's called ones are frequently in backsliding frames and cases. There are some of them, who again and again fall into their old constitutional sins. Some conceive such as are really converted to the Lord, never fall after their regeneration, into the same constitutional sins into which they fell before. Beloved, the regenerate are saved from the state of sin. They are not under the dominion of it; yet they have sin in them, yea, the whole body of the same. They have inherent in them, every lust and corruption they ever had; and some of them are sorely beset and frequently assaulted, and by the wiles of the devil overcome, and fall from their own steadfastness; and thus they backslide from the Lord. It is so, let us be willing freely to acknowledge it or not, that some sin more before conversion, and some more afterwards. Some of the elect fall into actual sin after they have been favored with the knowledge of the Lord, and with real communion with him, and some very peculiar consolations and enjoyments of him. And sometimes, their sins consist in sensuality; sometimes in temper; sometimes in a neglect of the Lord's own worship; sometimes in their own legality and unbelief; in their neglect of Christ,

and their treating the gospel with irreverence and contempt. I believe I have briefly enumerated all the ways in which the Lord's people can possibly backslide from him; which can only be in thought, word, and deed. As there can be no departure from the Lord, but it must produce its consequences; so none but backsliders know and feel the sorrows which arise from the same. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. If there are any here, who, with the speaker, know the plague of their own hearts, and have fallen, and still find themselves prone to fall from their Lord and Saviour by their iniquity, how sweet and most truly acceptable to them must the words here before us be: *O Israel, return unto the Lord, thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

This address from the Lord to his Israel, even to such of them as have backslidden from him, is all-sufficient, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to restore and invigorate their minds. I will, therefore,

Secondly, observe one substantial reason expressed in the text, for the return of backsliding Israel to God. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.* It lays in their relation to him, and his relation to them. He is the Lord their God. *Return unto the Lord thy God.*

All sin is the effect of unbelief. Every act of departure from the Lord is the fruit of it; let it be mental, or let it be open and manifest. To

give full and implicit credit to what the mouth of the Lord has spoken is the best, yea, it is the only preservative from sin of all sorts. The apostle says, *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*—Heb. iii, v. 12. As by unbelief we depart from God, so it is by faith we draw nigh unto him. And as sinners by the free and generous declarations of the grace of Father, Son, and Spirit, under the influences of the same, are at first divinely drawn to Christ to believe on Him, to receive Him, to trust in Him, and centre in Him for life everlasting; so when they have at any time backsliden from Him, it is by the same declarations of free grace, they are encouraged to return back again in heart and affection to Him. Backsliders need great encouragement, even from the Lord himself, to return to him. He is pleased to give it them. He does it in the words before us. He says, *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.* Here is every encouragement the Lord himself can give. There cannot be a greater evil or misery, than that which is contained in departing from the Lord. No words can speak it. No heart can fully conceive it; yet, whilst it contains the worst of evils, and is the greatest which can possibly befal any of the called children of the Most High, here is an all-sufficient remedy for the case. An exuberancy of grace; such as none but the Lord could declare; and

which he only, it having pleased him to express it in his most holy word, can make effectual. Every word is fraught with grace. It is the language of everlasting love. It fully proves that the Lord God hates putting away, and clearly evidences that he delighteth in mercy. As nothing in us makes us the Lord's, so there never was, neither is there in us, any thing which can destroy our relation unto the Lord; it being all founded upon sovereign, free, and everlasting favour. God's love is an act of his own will. The elect and chosen in Christ, are the objects and subjects thereof. These were created pure and holy in one man, Adam, their nature head; and they all fell in him into a state of condemnation. They were equally, and alike, corrupted by the fall. They have been redeemed, and raised above, and beyond all the ruins of the fall, by the covenant which obtained between Jehovah and the Branch, before the foundation of the world. When the Lord breaks forth in the revelation and manifestation of the same, in regeneration and effectual calling, there is a glorious display of his love and mercy. This is expressed thus: *God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.* It is also thus spoken of: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope*

by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. See Ephes. ii, v. 4, 5.; 1 Peter, i, v. 3. As the Lord's people have sin in them, so it cannot but be that it will in a variety of instances prevail over them. It cannot have dominion, because the Lord hath said, *Sin shall not have dominion over you.* It may operate within them. It does; so that some real saints fall into actual sin more after they are brought to the knowledge of Christ, than it may be they ever did before. The Lord, who from everlasting foresaw all this, was pleased to make a provision in the covenant of grace for such, by inserting this clause therein. *If my children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness I will not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant I will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David*—Psalm lxxxix, v. 30—35. Here are the worst cases of backsliding, and of backsliders expressed. And, beloved, what are the words of my text, but the fulfilment of this *nevertheless,* contained in the grace-part of the same Scripture? The Lord says to Israel, *Return unto the Lord thy God.* The interest the Lord God hath in his people can never be broken in upon;

neither can their interest in him be ever impaired or cease. It is always the same on both sides. The intercourse between the Lord and his people may be interrupted. It cannot but be so when we backslide from him; for if it had not been so in the case before us, the Lord would not have expressed himself as he here doth: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God.* It is most divinely encouraging what the Lord here says, *Return unto the Lord thy God. I am the Lord, gracious and merciful; pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. I am the Lord thy God. I am merciful and gracious. I will not keep anger for ever.— Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against me. I am the Lord which exerciseth lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord.* Beloved in the Lord, who is there amongst the called in Christ Jesus, let their backslidings be what they may, and be increased in guilt and enormity never so deeply, but these forecited Scriptures brought home to their minds, and imprinted on the same by the Spirit of the living God, but must be overcome with the rich, transcendent grace expressed in them? *I am,* says the Lord, *thy God.* Thy Father; thy Saviour; the Holy One of Israel; thy Salvation; thy Healer. *I am the Lord which healeth thee.* The covenant of my grace is what it ever was. The arms of my mercy are open to embrace

thee. I am immutable in my love and mercy. Thou art the object of it, and the subject on whom I will to display and express it. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God,* who waiteth to be gracious. Surely it is impossible for any of us to survey this subject in the light of faith, but we must be ravished with the same!

I now come thirdly to consider what the then present state and case of Israel was, when the Lord thus expressed himself in the words before us; and the reason he makes use of to hasten their return to him. It is this: they were departed from the Lord. The true consideration of this was sufficient to hasten their return to him. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

The mercy of God in Christ Jesus exceeds the very uttermost of our minds to receive any adequate ideas of. We sin; it brings guilt and condemnation with it; so as that our minds are deeply affected by the same. Sometimes we conceive we have no right to go to the Lord with it, and that we ought not to encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. Guilt in the conscience produces fear in the heart: so long as we indulge the same, it weakens our faith and keeps us from Christ. Israel was in this case: their sin and sinfulness was very great; they could not undo what they had wickedly done; neither could prophets and priests do them any good. Their

case was in its own nature irremediless ; it being so, the Lord makes their extremity his opportunity. He speaks to them in a most affectionate manner: he says, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* Israel, because fallen by his own iniquity, would have made use of it as an argument to continue in a backsliding state. It must of itself have produced such thoughts and reasonings as these. The Lord is an holy God; he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He chargeth his angels with folly, and the heavens themselves are not clean in his sight. We most assuredly are vile: there can be no hope for us. It cannot but become us to give up all hope even in the Lord, because our transgressions are many, and our backslidings are increased.—Yet because Israel's case is what it is, the Lord makes it an argument for an immediate return to him. Is it not so in these words: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity?* Most assuredly it is. And is not this like the grace which the Lord Jesus Christ will display towards these people in the latter day, when this promise shall receive its accomplishment? *And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a*

praise, and honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it. See Jer. xxxiii, v. 8, 9. At which time, as a people, they will cry out with the most devout admiration, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.* See Michah vii, v. 18. It is very delightful to go over the Scriptures in a way of believing, and consider how they most exactly suit all our cases. You and I, men and brethren, need the grace and mercy recorded in them, in our own persons and cases. We are the subjects of sin, and each of us have our personal and particular plague sores and maladies. We all need continual light and instruction, how to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, immediately and particularly with our guilt, and that even whilst it is upon our consciences; yet we find an averseness so to act, thereby making more of sin than we do of Christ; and because it makes a great alteration within us, and upon our minds, we conceive it must also on Christ's. We cannot think it right to go with a fresh contraction of sin and guilt immediately to the Lord Jesus; but are for praying it away, and getting into a better frame. We want something inherent in ourselves to comfort

and encourage us, notwithstanding the apostle says, *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* And the Lord in our text says to us, as truly as he did to his people of old, *Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* There are seasons, and cases, in which we never needed Christ more, and it may seem to us never so much: let us improve the same by going immediately and directly, in the exercise of faith on the blood and righteousness of Jesus, to Him, and that with all we are and all we have done. This is the only way for us to be brought into an actual intercourse with Christ, when we are oppressed with our spiritual maladies. Let not the consideration of any thing we have done, or may feel, or be chargeable with, keep us one single moment from Christ. If we cannot say more than *Lord save, or I perish,* let us be thankful to be enabled thus to cry.

As the subject before us does not end here, I only leave the present sermon. May the Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON II.

HOSEA XIV, v. 2.

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

WE have in these words a continuation of the former subject. Israel was fallen from the Lord by transgression. They could not by any means or power of their own return unto him. The Lord, out of his own free and sovereign grace, and from himself alone, is pleased most graciously to address them; and he calls upon them to return to him. This hath been opened in the former sermon. As they were altogether incapacitated by any power of their own to obey the Lord's command, neither knew they the course they should pursue, or how to draw nigh unto the Lord, and approach him; it pleased the Lord to draw up for them a form of prayer, which he puts into their mouths, and with which he sends them, that they might present themselves before him at his throne and mercy-seat, and there repeat it. They could not, in the case they were in, pray without words. They could not express

themselves with these words, but they must turn unto the Lord. This is the principal thing intended by the Lord himself. They are to pray unto him agreeable to their cases. It is to be expressed in the Lord's own words, with their own lips, that they may have an inward feeling and sense of their own backsliding cases, and of what alone could do them good. They are at this time under guilt, and the burden of their inherent and personal iniquities: this oppresses them. They are directed by the Lord to request him to take away from them all their iniquities. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.*

This is all I shall engage in at this time, which, if properly opened, will be sufficient. To an enlightened mind, the grace of God in all this will appear great and marvellous, and the subject itself vastly interesting. The experience in it is deep, and the effects produced by the same lasting. The advice in it is very instructive. The doctrine of salvation is opened; as also how believers are made partakers of the real blessings and benefits thereof. In opening the words before us I will set before you the following particulars.

First—The connexion of these words with the former.

Secondly—I will endeavour to open and explain the words and expressions made use of in

the text before us, or shew what is to be understood by them: that they express the whole grace and gracious design of the everlasting gospel. In what way we are to receive them, with the real blessedness contained therein; so far as the Lord may be pleased to make them efficacious unto us.

Thirdly—I will speak of the suitableness of them, as they belong to such as are in a case or state of backsliding, or on the verge of the same.

Fourthly—The most grateful acknowledgements of the supplicants. These are the particulars which we are to attend to. I am

First to notice these words with the former, as connected with each other. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and turn unto the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

The connexion of these verses is very evident and clear, as is also the next verse with these, which I might here shew, but shall defer that until I come immediately to it, having reserved it for a sermon by itself.

It is good to remember, that all Scripture, and whatsoever is contained and written in the same, was written for our learning, that we through patience and consolation, or comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. But to the present subject. Israel is fallen by her iniquity. What

is then to be done? What is requisite in this case? It most assuredly must consist in a return to the Lord. This is the very remedy pointed out, and prescribed by God himself. But might not Israel say, I know not how to return? I am not capable of expressing myself, nor my case. It is true, my heart is softened, and melts at such gracious words as these: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God;* for it proves to a demonstration, the Lord is gracious and merciful: yet such are my present apprehensions of my own sin and sinfulness, that were I to presume to return, I could not open my case. Indeed, indeed, I could not. I should even be as a beast before him. To prevent all these thoughts and self-reflections, the Lord says, *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.* Here is royal grace expressed in godlike language! most exactly adapted to the case: it is sufficient to remove all discouragements, and adds weight and emphasis to the former words. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* It puts words in the mouths of the suppliants. They are cogent; they are most particular, and exactly suited unto, and expressive of, the grace which those persons stood in need of. Should it please the Lord to assist me in opening and explaining them, I cannot but

expect to find heavenly treasure contained in the same. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* We see here what prayer is. It is the inwrought grace of the Holy Spirit in the mind. It is the fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit. It is simple and suitable to the case and experience of the child of God. It is comprehensive, and the fruit of the Lord's own teaching and inspiration. This being the precise truth of it, I will proceed with my designed subject, and go on

Secondly—To open and explain the expressions made use of in the words before us, and contained in this prayer: *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* I shall aim to shew what is to be understood by these expressions. That they contain for substance, the whole grace and gracious design of the everlasting gospel. In what way we are to receive them; with the real blessedness contained therein, so far as the Lord may be pleased to make them efficacious unto us. These are the particulars of this division of the text which is now before us to comment upon. The words contain a form of prayer, drawn up and prescribed by the Lord

himself. It may be said of this, as is frequently said of that which is commonly styled the Lord's prayer, it contains a directory for prayer; not a command for the use of it, but a form to model our supplications agreeable to the substance of the same, as it agrees with the whole essence and nature of true prayer and supplication. The Lord here gives forth his royal command to Israel to pray. He prepares a form of sound words, and puts them into the mouths of his people; nor could they of themselves have conceived any thing so expressive for themselves. The divine command for prayer is contained in these words, *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* The church in another place says, *Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned.* Lament. v, ver. 21. Here the Lord saith, *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.* Here is an exuberancy of grace. The Lord gives the words himself with which his backsliding people are to approach him. He commands them to approach him; to say after him that which will most fully express their case; be very expressive of the state of their feelings, and sense of their spiritual maladies, and of their own personal wants: that by the same they might be the more fully enlightened into clear views of the exceeding greatness of their guilt and pollution. In their repeating this before the Lord, they could not but feel and cry out, 'Behold we are vile.' 'We are altogether

unclean.' Yet they are not left to speak this; but they are to speak after the Lord. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity.* They had fallen by their iniquity; they needed it to be taken away from them; they could not take it off themselves, neither would their return to the Lord do this for them: if they could, there would have been no necessity for thus expressing the request at the throne, *Take away all iniquity.* And if all iniquity were not taken away, there could be no expectation of being received *graciously;* therefore the order, propriety, and connexion of these words, with the vast subject and importance of them, are well worthy of our observation: *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.* The Lord thus speaking expressly, particularly, and personally to his people, could not but most effectually cause them, in heart and soul, to turn to him. Their repeating after the Lord the very words which he had put into their mouths, could not but be the means of their being free and open with him at his throne. The Lord directing them to say to him, *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously,* shewed them what those blessings were they stood in need of, and which the Lord would, out of his royal bounty, bestow on them. The addition, *so will we render the calves of our lips,* expressed the

effect the answer to the prayer would produce in their minds. I am to shew what is to be understood by these expressions, and that they contain for substance, the whole grace and gracious design of the everlasting gospel. For what is it, but the remedy appointed by the Lord himself, as the only one for sin and sinners? And the whole salvation of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is contained and set forth therein. I am to take up the following terms and explain them: in so doing I shall have an opportunity of setting forth the glorious gospel of the blessed God. The expressions, *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*, are of vast importance; and not only so, but, as will appear in the scriptural opening of them, contain some glorious doctrines of free and sovereign grace. The Lord pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin, as an act of his royal prerogative; yet not to the exclusion and neglect of the honour of his law and justice. This act, though a sovereign one, is founded on the ancient acts and transactions which passed in the counsel and covenant between Him, and his co-equal Son, before the foundation of the world, when God was in Christ, not imputing their trespasses unto the elect, but to their Surety, who engaged to bear their sins, and carry their sorrows. Christ is the propitiation. Israel was fallen by her iniquity. She is called upon to return unto the Lord her God. The way is opened for her return. This is

by the Lord alone. He proclaims it, and gives her the information. He provides her with words, and puts them into her mouth, that she may want no manner of encouragement. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Israel was under a sense of sin and guilt; to have the same taken away, and removed from the mind, was the only remedy suited to the case. We cannot remove sin from ourselves: nor can the Lord *receive us graciously*, and hold free communion with us, unless our iniquities be removed. This is to us, therefore, a subject of the greatest importance. It is not a simple act of pardon that will suit my case. I acknowledge it to be an instance of surprising mercy. I have some real knowledge of it, and I bless the Lord for the same; yet I esteem the taking away mine iniquity from me, as grace vastly superior to it: but can I expect the Lord to take away mine iniquity, so as that I shall be free from it, inherently, or so as that I shall be without it, and never feel it, or fall by it any more? No, No. Sin will never be taken out of me, or eradicated from my fallen nature, so long as I remain in a time-state. The Lord's taking away my sin, is a very different act from all this: and the true knowledge that the Lord hath taken away your sin, and my sin, is the one foundation for faith and hope in God.

There is a necessity for our knowledge of the same, as without it we cannot have everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. It is brought in for this very purpose, by the Lord himself. These poor sinners whom he here addresses, let their sorrows or repentance be what they might, could only be relieved by the Lord alone. He is pleased to point out to them the only way by which they might be healed. This was by the Lord's taking away their iniquity. When *David* had most grievously transgressed the law of God, and *Nathan*, the prophet, was sent by the Lord to charge his sin upon him, he cries out, *I have sinned against the Lord.* The prophet rejoined, *The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.* It was this broke the heart of the sinner. And so here in the case before us; these words, *Take away all iniquity*, being answered by the Lord, and made known in the grace-part of it to the mind of the petitioners, would be all-sufficient to break the heart of stone, and turn it into a heart of flesh. The grace of the gospel, or the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, is the sole remedy which the Lord hath provided for the taking away of sin. This hath been completed by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The proclamation is made known by the everlasting gospel. It is brought home to the ear and heart of a poor sinner. He receives the report of the same through the light and teachings of the

Holy Spirit into his heart; and hereby finds immediate relief. *Take away all iniquity.* The taking away sin, by the sacrifice of Christ, is the one great leading truth of the everlasting gospel. In the true knowledge of the same, the peace of the conscience is very greatly concerned. How the Messiah was to remove the sins of his people, out of the sight of law and justice, and from before the Lord, was one of the first subjects of revelation made known by the Lord, immediately upon the fall. In the instituted and daily sacrifices under the Patriarchal and Levitical economy, the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was recorded. The sacrifices and services respecting the scape goat, as recorded in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, expressed how Christ once in the end of the world would appear, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And without doubt, reference is here made to this great subject: it being by the confession of sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the Children of Israel, by the Lord's command, over the head of the scape goat, and laying the same thereon, that the people were discharged from them. The substance of all I aim at as before mentioned, seems contained in the following declaration of grace: *In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I*

reserve. Jer. l, v. 20. Now the receiving this into the mind is the means of its becoming effectual to us. The Lord speaks out this grace for this purpose, that his people may receive the benefit of the same. The Lord letting in on the renewed mind a scriptural apprehension of Christ having taken away sin, by his blood and righteousness; it is by this he takes off, and removes guilt and sin from the mind, which relieves the conscience: this produces peace, and it is hereby enjoyed, and thus the pardon of sin is evidenced to believers in Christ Jesus. *Take away all iniquity;* and wherever iniquity is removed, there is free access to the Lord. *The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin.* Such have boldness and access with confidence to the throne of grace by the faith of Him. *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.* God looking on his people in the person of Christ, and giving them to know that all their iniquities are done away in him, he shines upon them most freely in the person of his Beloved. He reflects his grace and truth upon their minds, and into their hearts; and thus he assures them of his everlasting favour, love, and good will towards them. He puts them upon praying for these blessings, that they may be sensibly affected with the want of them; that coming before him with his own words, and beseeching him to deal thus and thus with them, they might, receiving the

same as the fruits of his free grace, be the more truly and deeply affected with them. As these were to be received in a way of grace on the Lord's part, and in a way of believing on theirs; so the blessings and blessedness contained in these communications from the Lord, were inexpressible. They are so to any of us to the very present moment, when the Lord is pleased to make the same declarations efficacious unto us. The grace of the text extends unto us, as truly as to those unto whom it was first pronounced; as it also does, and will extend to God's Israel in the latter day; and here is the glory and perfection of the same: *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Here is true repentance and godly sorrow for sin included, and expressed in all this. There can be no genuine repentance until Christ hath looked upon us, and enabled us to look unto him; neither shall we ever be raised up above our sins, until we are brought to understand that they are freely removed from us by the death of Christ, and freely forgiven us for his name's sake. As all contained in the expressions of the text, is very applicable to describe the grace and gracious design of the everlasting gospel, so I proceed

Thirdly—To speak of the suitableness of them as they belong to such as are in a case, or

state of backsliding, or on the very verge of the same.

There is a continual change, a flux, and reflux in the frames, tempers, cases, and feelings, of the people of God. Some of them seem to be more liable to fall into sin than others; but none are safe one single moment, but as they are kept by the power of God; and eternally secure, as they have real communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many of the Lord's called and beloved ones, whose walk, temper, and conversation, appear irreproachable, to whom the term of backsliding, and backsliders, does by no means seem to apply; yet, are conscious in themselves, there are many solemn evidences within them, that the heart is deceitful above all things: and that in innumerable instances they have reason to bewail the fickleness of their wills, and the inconstancy of their hearts and affections, so that they are not always, and at all times, and in every circumstance, cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart: yet as all this is before the Lord, and none searcheth the heart but him; so we are not so disposed to call this backsliding, as we are when any open sin and guilt have been contracted. Among such as we conceive by the term backsliders, or as we conceive are on the eve of backsliding, are such as have gone, or are going off, from a close and regular attention to the Lord's worship and ordinances, and are fallen into some actual transgression; and, even to such

as these, if any of us here present are such, the text before us, and every particular expression and sentence in it, are most suitably adapted: for such are fallen from the Lord. It is of their own iniquity; it is of themselves. They cannot undo that which they have done amiss. If they are on the verge of departure from the Lord, and by a transient act of the will; yet this wandering of the heart from God cannot be recovered to all eternity. All sin is seated in the will. It is the will in sin, contains the evil in the act; yet let what has been, what now is, or may ever be the case of a child of God, or any of the children of God collectively considered, what the Lord here says is most expressly suited to be balm to their wounds; a cordial to revive them, and a medicine to heal them; an encouragement for their return to the Lord: *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* Even this is matter of great encouragement to a backslider. I have backslidden from the Lord. How? By what means? I answer: by falling into sin. There can be no other way, O man, for thy backsliding. I have done so and so. Yea, my will hath been in it. My heart hath been in it. I am under the guilt of it. This brings me under the prevailing power and influence of it. I cannot lift myself above the same. No; indeed I cannot. Man, whosoever thou art, who speakest thus, thou speakest the truth. But

what saith the Lord God? He speaks these words, and he speaks them even unto thee. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.* But how shall I return? What shall I say? How shall I confess my sin, and express myself unto him? O man! this is all provided. He says, *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Where can we find grace and words in all the book of God, more immediately suited to a backslider, than these before us? I conceive we cannot any where. They are spoken by the Lord. They are spoken to me and you. They are spoken unto us, because we are what we are; because we have backslidden from him; because we have fallen by our iniquity; because we are in our own minds under guilt and condemnation. It is because we cannot lift up ourselves above the same; nor leave aside our own thoughts and disquietudes, therefore he says, *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words and turn to the Lord.* Surely, all this is very expressive of the divine compassion, grace, and benignity of the ever blessed God. He waiteth to be gracious. His love to thee, and his covenant with Christ on thy behalf, is the same it ever was. There is no alteration here; say, therefore unto him, *Take away all iniquity.* How

is this to be done? By lifting up thy mind to consider what he hath already done on thy behalf, and for thee. *Hath he not made thine iniquities to pass from thee, and clothed the with change of raiment? Hath not the Lord laid on Christ the iniquities of us all?* Is it not in those acts which passed between Jehovah and the Branch, thy whole salvation was perfected? Then, O backsliding man, the Lord the Spirit directing thy mind to this important transaction, thou wilt by the true realization thereof, be lifted up to the Lord in glorious views of thy complete pardon and deliverance from all the imputation of thy sin and guilt, let it consist in what it may, through the present, perpetual, and everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Lamb: then thou wilt have a blessed sense of the views the Father takes of thee in his Beloved; and thereby see how he receives thee graciously at his throne, and delights to converse freely and openly with thee, through the person and mediation of his Son, the Lord Jesus. I have endeavoured to open this part of the subject as clearly as I could, it being most truly and divinely blessed, rightly to apprehend the same; most especially to such as are, have been, and may be, on the verge of backsliding from the Lord. It would be of great relief to us, to receive these truths into our minds; to meditate continually on them; and to rejoice in the grace contained in them, we should find

them salutary, life-giving, faith-strengthening, and conscience-satisfying words. They would not only restore us from our backsliding cases, frames, and heart-wanderings from God; but they would also, as we dwelt upon them, and enjoyed fellowship with God in them, preserve us from falling into the same. This brings me to the last particular, which is

Fourthly—To notice the most grateful acknowledgments of these suppliants: *We will render the calves of our lips. Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

The free grace of God expressed in the text, as exercised on Israel who had fallen from the Lord by iniquity, could not but affect their minds; nay, the Lord speaks of this as the very fruit of his own grace towards them: for they are all his own words from first to last. That you may see it is even so, I will recite them. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.* Whilst it could not be any less than what such matchless grace, brought home to their ears and manifested to their minds, must demand of them; yet the Lord claims all this to himself, as the fruit which his own grace produced in them: in which words there is contained an acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on these favorites of free

grace. It may be here noticed what the apostle saith, *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* At the time these words were delivered, the saints, on some occasions, presented their offerings of praise to God for singular blessings received from him, by the oblations of sacrificial animals; instead of which, the calves of our lips are substituted. The pardoned ones of God would render unto his Divine Majesty, the true and spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise. The prophet's phraseology, *so will we render the calves of our lips,* seems most fully opened by the apostle in these words: *By him,* (i. e. by Jesus, our Altar, Priest, and Sacrifice, for this is the subject contained in the context.) *therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* Heb. xiii, v. 15. *The calves of our lips,* in the prophet, is *the fruit of our lips,* in the apostles words and exposition of them. When the Lord is pleased to overcome our minds by the manifestations of his pardoning mercy, we cannot but open our mouth, and with our lips shew forth his glorious praise. At a future period, when the Lord shall call his people, the Jews, from their present state of sin, and backsliding from him, they will be filled with his glorious praise; and we who have been enlightened with the light of everlasting life, and called out of darkness into his marvellous light, under

the influences of the Holy Ghost within us and upon us, cannot but utter forth his great and glorious praise. We, whose sins he has taken away, who have received Christ and his atonement into our minds, and are thereby brought under the influential virtue and efficacy of the same, cannot but render the calves of our lips, by offering the sacrifice of praise continually, giving thanks to his name.

May the Lord accompany, with his blessing and Spirit, that which hath been delivered to you. Amen.

SERMON III.

HOSEA XIV, v. 3.

Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

WE have here the true portrait of real penitents. The present words are very expressive of the minds of such as are enquiring after God. None can give the account of the same but the Lord himself; for their every spiritual sense, feeling, and perception, come from him only.

As there are peculiar affections wrought in the mind, when sinners belonging to the election of grace are first made particularly acquainted with their own guilt, sinfulness, and heart apostacy from the Lord; so as it respects those who have awfully backslidden from the Lord, their frames and feelings on their sense of this, and their experiences which consist in their inward apprehension of the same, as it is only known unto the Lord, so he alone can describe it. Whilst I am no great friend to our descriptions of what we feel under a variety of cases; yet I most highly value what is recorded in the scriptures, either of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of the regenerate, or that which respects the state of their minds and inward feelings, as stated and set before us in the written Word. The two former verses with the present one, form one grand whole: a chain of truths and experiences, of causes and effects, which are not to be separated one from the other. The reason why I have cast them into three distinct sermons is, that the important truths contained in them, might the more clearly and distinctly appear. I will now recite them. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon*

horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. By the good words the Lord hath spoken, the people are called up, and encouraged to return to Him from whom they had deeply revolted. The Lord, in order to facilitate their return to him, puts the very words into their mouths which most exactly suited their cases, and were fully expressive of their desires. They felt what they were, and they expressed themselves before the Lord agreeably to the same. This was according to the divine direction.—*Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* The whole is the language of true repentance. It is all genuine. One part of the prayer makes way for the rest. The request for the *taking away all iniquity*, makes way for the Lord's *receiving graciously*. Upon this, these poor sinful backsliders are constrained to say, *So will we render the calves of our lips:* ascribing our whole salvation, from sin, the world, Satan, death, and hell, and our present recovery from our past backsliding, to thy free grace and mercy; for it is in thee alone the fatherless and guilty find mercy. When the Lord thus works

upon any of us, it is in connexion with that great promise, in which he expresses himself thus: *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.* Zech. xii, v. 10. When the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to look influentially and manifestatively upon his church, and thus shine upon them, and into their hearts; it cannot but of necessity produce these most blessed and gracious effects, and also these benign influences in their hearts and minds. The words of my present text contain the following particulars.

First—Here is a renunciation of all help and succour, in all creatures, and all dependance for salvation, on any thing inherent.

Secondly—A declaration of having no more to do with any of the works of their hands.

Thirdly—The reason which is assigned for this. It is because of that which the Lord is, and of what such as these before us have found him to be; and such also as have been like themselves have found him to be: even him who compassionates the fatherless, and in whom such, even in their most deplorable cases, and when in their most abject and deplorable circumstances

find mercy. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.*

I am first to explain this part of my present text, which contains a renunciation of all help and succour, in all creatures, and all dependance in any thing inherent for salvation. *We will not ride upon horses.*

It will be good for us here to observe, we have all the initials of true gospel sorrow, and godly grief for sin, with all contained in that repentance which is unto, and belongs unto everlasting life expressed. Turning to the Lord, acknowledging our case, deploring our sinfulness, praying for the Lord's gracious acceptation of us, a declaration of our future acknowledgement of these gratuitous acts of the Lord towards us; and then a full renunciation of ourselves, with the sole ascription to the free grace of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Essential Three, in the one Incomprehensible Godhead; this involves and includes all contained in godly sorrow for sin; in turning to the Lord, in taking hold of his covenant, and pleading the same at his throne of grace. Now let us but read afresh all the preceding words, with those now before us, and all this will shine forth as clear and evident as light doth from the sun. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. When we are at first convinced of our sinfulness, that sin which has been most captivating to our minds, and carried us off into the commission of abundance of transgressions, is the one we most bitterly lament and bewail; so when restored from a backsliding state and case, those things which have most conspired to take off our confidence from the Lord, and estranged our hearts from him, are the very same we most heartily detest, and of all others renounce, when under the mighty operation of grace, we are constrained to return back again to him. It was one of the national sins of Israel, to trust in the Assyrians for help and succour; when in trouble and distress they looked to them. They are by many of the prophets warned of this evil, and most severely reproved for the same; yet all this did not save them from it: so we are all of us looking to, and trusting in something of our own, or in ourselves, to save us, until by the light of the Lord's Word and Spirit, we are fully convinced we can do nothing for ourselves. Israel, convinced by the Lord of his exceeding sinfulness in his backsliding state

and case, renounces all confidence in false helps and refuges. He cries out before the Lord, *Asshur shall not save us.* Thus he gives up all hope and expectation in all creatures for salvation: We will no longer seek relief in human means. It is a very important effect of our truly turning to the Lord, to renounce ourselves wholly and altogether. When we have a true sight of Christ, as sin is in our view the greatest of all evils, so self is also the greatest monster in religion; we are therefore led to disclaim it in all its forms; to renounce it in all its shapes; to reject every thing felt, or wrought in us, as any part of our foundation and hope in God. The blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ is our one foundation and hope for everlasting life. He is our rock, and his work is perfect. The free grace of God in him, the glorious mediator of reconciliation, is our refuge and defence. We say as Israel here is commanded to say, *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.* We will not seek relief from Egypt. This old testament-language was most exactly suited to the people to whom the Lord gave forth these words by his servant the prophet. And they are also well suited to the people of Israel in the latter day, when they shall be turned unto the Lord; as they will when they are delivered out of the hands of all their enemies, and effectually turned to the Lord, say, *Some trust in chariots, and some*

in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. Psalm xx, v. 7, 8. The Assyrians and Egyptians were the allies of Israel. They were again and again warned of the evil they would sustain, in consequence of their trust and dependance on them; therefore in this account of their return to the Lord, in a way of repentance and confession of their sin, their rejection of these false confidences is here recited. *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.* No longer will we trust in an arm of flesh: neither will we put any confidence in human means. Surely in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, and from the multitude of the mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. There we reject all others, and look alone, and simply trust in Him. All this is very congenial to a true, spiritual return to God. It is the language of their minds, *O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.* The Lord puts these words into the mouths of these returning backsliders, as he had done the former, for they are a continuation of the same. *Take*

with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses. It may be observed how one truth is connected with another. Regeneration is the foundation of conversion. The former is an act of God towards us; and it is wrought in us and upon us. Conversion is the fruit of this, and consists in our return unto the Lord. This is effected in us, as we are led by the Word and Spirit to apprehend the love and good will of God in Christ towards us, the complete salvation the Lord Jesus Christ hath wrought out for us; and that the whole of it, with all the blessings of the same, are treasured up in the fulness of the Saviour, and that we are to receive the same in our actual communion with him. As the true knowledge of this subject is communicated to our minds, we perceive it is by a spiritual knowledge of salvation we are set at liberty from all bondage. That hereby also it is we enjoy the presence of Christ, and free access unto him. It is this brings us to renounce all confidence in our selves. It leads us to say, *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses.* We will not attempt our own salvation. No; God forbid: we are perfectly satisfied with Christ. His righteousness and blood are our perfection and purity. His

free pardon and peace are the joy of our hearts, and having the experience of these, we are most blessedly satisfied. This brings me on

Secondly—To the declaration, which is expressive that Israel will have no more to do with the work of their hands. *Asshur shall not save us; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.* This we will for ever reject, renounce, and despise. A blessed fruit and evidence this, of their true and sound conversion to the Lord.

Without all doubt, the terms here used are very expressive of the rejection of idols, and idolatrous worship; it being the national sin, which might well be called the work of their hands, as these dunghill deities were framed by them: and this shewed the extreme folly and stupidity of such as had the word and ordinances of God amongst them, to say to a stock, Thou art my father; and to worship the work of their own hands; as though figures of wood and stone, so and so formed, with the insignia and attributes of deity ascribed unto them, could help in times of trouble: yet, it was even thus for a long season with the Ten Tribes. From the setting up the kingdom of Israel under *Jeroboam, the son of Nebat,* it continued under the succession of nineteen kings, all of whom were idolaters for the space of two hundred and fifty-four years. These kings were of nine distinct families, but all of them enemies to God,

and his Christ: yet under some of these our prophet lived, and prophesied; and by him the Lord was pleased to call on his elect amongst them to return to him. It cannot be conceived, but the Lord made the ministry of this his servant effectual to some of them. The influences of divine grace upon some, and the conversion of a nation, are distinct subjects. The one may be where the other is not. It is woe and alas to us in this kingdom, if it be not thus. As the prophecy in this chapter reaches down to the future call and restoration of Israel in the latter day, so it expresses their state at that very time. To the very moment of their call they will remain in their state of backsliding from the Lord, and rejection of Messiah their Prince. It may be to the very instant of the Lord's fulfiling these gracious promises unto them, there will be no more appearance of their accomplishment, than there is at this moment: yet, he will have looked upon them, and thereby effected this wonderful grace, that *the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel shall be towards the Lord;* then these things expressed in our text shall be completely fulfilled, and the grace contained in the same be most gloriously displayed. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*

Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. Whilst it may refer as I conceive to a future period; yet, it by no means sets aside the present grace and use of the passage. When we are wrought upon, in a day of the Lord's power, and are actually under the operation of divine grace, the same effects are produced in our minds. A sinner having received the knowledge of Christ, and the pardon of sin into his mind, from the testimony of the Spirit of God, cries out with self-abhorrence, and self-renunciation, I renounce all reliance in whole, and in part, in all the works of my hands. God be merciful to me a sinner, through the propitiatory sacrifice of the holy and immaculate Lamb.—*Asshur shall not save us; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods.* This is the language of all repenting sinners: of every broken and contrite heart; of all the spiritual mourners in Zion; of the outcasts of Israel; of such as are bound and oppressed in their minds, in consequence of the acquaintance and knowledge they have of the plague of their own hearts: it is such as those whose cases have been described, to whom the grace of Christ, as expressed in the gospel, is most exactly suited. The great and glorious Mediator is pleased to express himself, respecting his grace, work, and office, thus:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Isaiah lxi, v. 1—3. Surely all these spoken of here, must with one heart and soul, be divinely constrained to say, *Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses,* as expecting the Egyptians will be able to save us. No; we will have no further expectation from them; we will for ever more renounce them, and give up all expectation of salvation and assistance from them; we will say no more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods. No more will we make mention of these; we have found of a truth, our whole salvation is in the Lord alone; we will therefore rest and centre alone in him, and make him our all: this is our reason for so doing, and which we express, even before his gracious and glorious Majesty, and utter it to the praise of the glory of his grace: *For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* I conceive that on a retrospective

view of what hath been expressed, as the outline of the former, and included in the present verse, it will be acknowledged as most truly expressive of true repentance, even of that which is after a godly sort, as also of a true penitent; by which I mean, such as the Lord the Holy Spirit hath wrought upon, and let in such knowledge and apprehensions of God the Father's free grace, and everlasting love in Christ Jesus, towards poor backsliders, upon the heart, as of, and from itself alone, produces these most gracious effects. I am now brought to the conclusion of the present subject. I come, therefore

Thirdly—To shew, and give the reason, which is assigned for what is expressed in the former part of these words. It is this: *For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* This is the very emphasis of the whole. It contains the very essence of all, and may be said to be the original of all contained in the whole of the past expressions of the grace of God to his backsliding Israel: the sinfulness of whom could not be expressed; neither could the riches of grace, as expressed by the Lord in his own word, be fully fathomed; yet the sense and impression made of all this upon the mind of the subjects of the same, is here in the words now before us, thus emphatically expressed: *For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* Mercy is in the Lord. It is inherent in him. It is a perfection of his glorious nature. In the dis-

play and manifestation of it he takes delight; so that the prophet *Micah* personating the Jews, at the very time these great acts of grace shall be displayed towards and upon them, breaks forth, saying, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.* Micah vii, v. 18. It will be necessary for us to carry all these views of God's mercy, to the close of the present subject, by which I mean, the close of the present verse: for though the subject of the grace of this chapter does not end here; yet, this closes the three first verses, of which the two last more immediately contain the sense and apprehension the pardoned ones in Christ Jesus, express concerning the subject. To shew the full and clear truth of this, let us for the last time have the subject fully before us, by the recital afresh of all the three verses. *O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* The very perfection of Israel's return to the Lord, will be their casting off, laying aside, and rejecting all creature confidences.

It is so with us, when we see that in Christ which satisfies our minds; and, when we receive such conceptions of God's free pardon of all our transgressions, as give our minds the most full and perfect satisfaction, it is then, and thereby we do from our very hearts, cast away all creatures and all works, with regard to any thing they can do for us, or be unto us: and in so doing, we prove the truth of our conversion to the Lord; and are enabled to give the reason before God and man, why we so do: it is, because in the Lord alone we have salvation. It springs solely from his own sovereign mercy and compassions; and what we know and experience of the same, is the fruit thereof. We cannot put into words our conceptions of it; for they are always weak, and far below the subject. We feel more of the subject than we can at any time express; and a warming sense of it kept up in our minds, is a great part of our spiritual life, holiness, and spirituality; which the more it is increased in us, and we are brought under its sacred influences, the more spiritually minded we are, and the more disposed to walk before the Lord, unto all well-pleasing. Renouncing *the work of our hands*, may respect our casting off all reliance on our own legality, in our former prayers, religious services, and all which is sometimes expressed by old Adam's religion; as also on all past and present dependences in frames and feelings, convictions, sor-

rows, reformations, religious duties and performances, religious joys and comforts: a looking wholly away from them, and trampling on the same, saying, with the prophet, *We are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.* Proper views of ourselves, and the experience of what we are inherently in ourselves, as the subjects of all the sinfulness, corruption, and evil, contained in the first Adam's apostacy from the Lord, which we inherit as being in him, as our public head when he fell; will lead us to despise ourselves, to renounce ourselves, and to say as backsliding Israel here doth, *Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* Our salvation is the fruit of everlasting love; it is a system of grace, whereby all the covenant mercies of Godhead are magnified, revealed, and made known to the elect of mankind; and it is all suited to them as sinners. The Mediator, and head of the everlasting covenant, is most divinely fitted, and exactly suited, to each, and every individual of his believing ones. They are all of them members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. All the treasures of grace, and all the riches of mercy, are stored up in him. It hath pleased the Father that in him, as Mediator, should all fulness dwell. In the words of our text, these persons make these acknowledgments: *In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* This is very

expressive and emphatical. It is to sinners in the uttermost need that Christ is a Saviour. And according to the divine procedure, he generally in his teachings by his Word and Spirit, makes such sensible of their exceeding sinfulness, and entirely lost and helpless condition. So that the words before us, not only contain their inward experience, but the very confession of their lips. We will no more trust in ourselves, or in any works of ours, we will betake ourselves to thy free grace alone. *For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy:*—and in thee only. The mercy of God, in Christ Jesus, suits the most desperate case which can be found out of hell. And whose sinful cases can be worse, than those of God's backsliding children? who, after having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion, have cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God! yea, what is more tremendous, some who have had fellowship with the Lord, in his pardoning mercy; yet, through the influence of sin, and the deceit of their own hearts, have fallen again and again into the actual commission of constitutional evils. And this after having most solemnly bewailed themselves before the Lord over and over again, with the utmost sincerity. Such can never be recovered from these cases, or lifted up towards the Lord in faith and hope, but by free grace alone. And where shall we look for it, if we do not find it in these words? *In thee the fa-*

therless findeth mercy. Which expressions are suited to point out the exceeding greatness of divine compassion. The fatherless need it. They are spoken of in the Scriptures, as having the eye and compassion of the Lord remarkably exercised towards them. Therefore the words are here used, to convey the idea of God's mercies to his people, in the worst cases they can possibly be in. Hence the Psalmist says, *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* Psalm ciii. 13, 14. When it is given us to apprehend Christ as most exactly suited to us, and the whole of our case of sin and misery, and to apprehend ourselves, just as we are, and feel and know ourselves to be, this brings us to converse with Christ, and close with him as sinners with a saviour. This leads us to say, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.* As there is no sin or sinner, can surpass the grace of Christ, so there is no sin or sinner for whom Christ died, but shall be the subject of Jehovah's pardoning grace and mercy. Neither shall there ever be any sort or kind of sin, be it backsliding, yea, let the same be increased as it may, but the pardoning mercy of God, and the blood of Christ, shall everlastingly exceed it, and bear it all down, and cover and blot it out: and the true manifestative knowledge of this, will

lead the Jews when they partake of it, to cry out, He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. The Lord bless what hath been delivered. Amen.

SERMON IV.

HOSEA XIV, v. 4.

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

THE free grace of God, in the person and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the one grand subject of the volume of divine inspiration. As most closely connected herewith, we have the heart of our heavenly Father opened unto us, in the declarations of his free, royal, and incomprehensible mercy. This as far surpasses our sins and sinfulness, as his self-existing Godhead, does our creature capacities; if it were not so, the revelation he has made of himself in Christ Jesus, would not suit our present exigencies: for sin is sin: we are the subjects of it: we have been the committers of the same, and we can never undo what we

have done. Yesterday can never be recalled; neither can we annihilate our past or present sinful acts. *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do.* The pardoning mercy of God exceeds all the sin and sinfulness of the elect. The proclamation of the same, in the written word, goes beyond all their sin. The freeness and full expressions made use of by God himself, exceed all which could ever have entered into the mind of men or angels to have conceived. And it is only by the right knowledge of the same, that any poor sinner, brought to a real knowledge of himself, can renounce all self-dependance, and rest in the Lord alone, for everlasting life. Yet, there are none, let their professions of Christ be what they may, if they have not been brought under the mighty power, authority, and influence of the doctrine of free grace and pardoning mercy, but will be raising their objections against it, and will be full of slandering against those unto whom it is given to set forth the same. The one will be insisting on it to be dangerous to the souls of men, to be dwelling upon the freeness of divine pardon, of all sorts and kinds of transgressions through the blood of the Lamb: that this is the way to encourage men in their sin, and not the way of bringing them out of their sins, to loathe, abhor and forsake them: that such doctrines are dangerous, and such preachers are to be suspected. Whereas the doctrine is ac-

cording to godliness, and those who preach the same, under the teaching and influence of the Holy Ghost, are the very persons who are most saved from sin, of any who are on this side of heaven. It is too awfully overlooked, by those who cavil at free grace, and preaching the same, according to the statement of it, as given in the divine record, That the mind of no one sinner out of hell, can ever be raised up to a lively faith and hope in God; but, as he is brought to a true knowledge of the pardon of all his sin, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. He must first know the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that God hath freely forgiven him all trespasses; or, his conscience cannot be discharged from guilt and condemnation. Whilst it is not, he will be as to himself, under the influence of the love and power of sin. Nothing therefore can suit the case, but the free declarations of grace. And these as contained in the most glorious proclamations of pardoning all sorts and kinds of sinners. This only reaches unto, and brings home the subject to the awakened sinner's own personal case, so as that he is most sensibly affected herewith. That the efficacy of the blood and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, exceeds and transcends all the guilt and evil contained in sin; and, that free pardon and forgiveness of the whole demerit, contained in the same, surmounts it to an infinite degree! this is

the doctrine of the everlasting gospel, it is revealed in the same, and published thereby. Our Lord himself said unto his Apostles: *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* In the Old Testament, the Lord himself is pleased to speak most freely and abundantly upon this subject. His prophets do the same in his great name. It is the very doctrine of our present text which is not spoken for the Lord, but by himself. It comes in as an answer to the prayer backsliding Israel had poured out before him. It shews how well pleased he was with the same, it being indited by him, and put into their mouths: *O Israel return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* The words in themselves contain inexpressible grace. They are the Lord's. They were pronounced to sinners in the worst of cases, and who had been guilty of the

worst of crimes. For what cases can be worse than backsliding ones? There being guilt and aggravation in them which in some circumstances surpass description; and sometimes will not admit of particular enumeration. Yet, here they are all borne down with the free mercy and pardon of the Lord God, he saying, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him;* and, seeing he is pleased thus to speak, and act agreeable to what he says, *Who shall say unto him, what dost thou?* My business is to give the interpretation of the text: this cannot be done, but the grace and glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the same, must of necessity be attended unto. In my view, the words express in substance, more than can be found in so short a compass in all the Bible. I am at a loss how to divide them, least any part of the virtue of them should be lost. They contain three very important particulars without any division, which I will place as they are in the text itself. They are three, and are as follows: 1. *I will heal their backsliding.* 2. *I will love them freely.* 3. *For mine anger is turned away from them.* They are all three founded one upon another; and, one is the cause of the other. The healing of backsliding makes way for the free love of God, to break forth in the glorious manifestations of the same. The reason for which is, because the anger of God is removed from them.

To open each of these particulars is to explain the words before me. This might be done without any more division; yet, I think to set before you the complete subject, thus: and in these following divisions. May the Lord be with me in so doing. I will first, Speak of the Lord's free grace, in healing the backsliding of his people. Secondly, Of the manner in which this is made known to them. Thirdly, In what way, and by what means they receive the inward sense and benefit thereof. *I will heal their backsliding.* Here is the will of God in this.

Secondly—The freeness of God's love to his pardoned ones shall be taken notice of. This he is pleased thus to express: *I will love them freely.* What is contained in this, none but God himself can tell. The pardoned ones know how they are affected with it; yet the grace of all this is only known to the Lord. It is himself that speaks these words, who alone can fathom what is contained in them. *I will love them freely.*

Thirdly—The reason for all this, healing backsliding and loving those healed *freely*, is given in these words: *For mine anger is turned away from him.* Thus having given the outline of the present Sermon, I proceed to preach it.

And I will first speak of the Lord's free grace, in healing the backsliding of his people. *I will heal their backsliding.* It has been observed that these words are an answer to prayer. As such

we observe the Lord put Israel on calling on him, that he might be in the expressions of his good-will towards them, all that was absolutely necessary for them, in a way of mercy, health, and pardon. We have the will of God in these expressions of his grace. He says, *I will heal your backsliding*. The Lord's will is immutable. It is an act of his royal mind: nothing can frustrate this. In those most gracious words, Jehovah speaks to Moses, as recorded in Exodus, chap. xxxiii. 19, we have them thus expressed: *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* The grace of God, is the free favour of God. This he is pleased to exercise upon, and towards his people, as seemeth good in his sight. The first act of his favor towards them was, in his everlasting love to their persons in Christ, before all time; and, all the after acts and expressions of his favour, originate from his ancient and eternal love. It may be said to be one, and the same act of love, only distinguished and expressed as the objects of the same, are in such circumstances. They, having fallen in Adam, are sinners, and sinful as considered in him, and in the nature they received from him: because of this, they needed redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ, from the state they were brought into by Adam's transgression. And they need a translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And these acts, in which

their whole salvation, and knowledge and enjoyment of the same are concentrated, are acts and instances of everlasting love. Now it comes to pass, that the inherent sinfulness of God's elect breaks out beyond all our conceptions. I really conceive thus of it: as there is no sin but is included in original sin, and this is one and the same in the elect, as in the non-elect: so there is no one evil it can produce, but it doth. That in the economy of the Lord's holy providence, there is no one sin, take the whole body of the elect, but they fall into the commission of; some in an unregenerate state, and some in a converted state. And the grace of God is displayed in the pardon of each, and every personal sin of the whole election of grace. All the elect do not fall into the same way of sin and sinning, yet, they all fall into actual sin; and, one or other into the very same with the non-elect, except it be into a final rejection and apostacy, denying the Lord Jesus Christ altogether. According to this, my apprehensions are, that the mercy of God, displayed in his pardoning acts, extends to all this. And as the Father laid on Christ the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; so the blood of Christ, cleanseth the whole election of grace from all sin; and the pardoning mercy of God extends to all these cases. This is grace worthy of God. He pardoneth according to the greatness of his mercy

He is the *God of Pardon.* He is ready to pardon. He is gracious and merciful. And the title of all his people in our world, is vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory. His mercy towards them before conversion is very great. It is by the Apostle Peter thus expressed: *The Lord is long suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* 2 Pet. ch. iii. 9. The breakings forth of everlasting love towards us, at the time of our spiritual quickening, are thus expressed by the Apostle Paul, and thus described; *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved:)* Eph. ii. 4, 5. And Peter says, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* 1 Pet. i. 3. The display of grace in the free pardon of all the sins of the elect, is by us incomprehensible. In the instance before us, it is even so. It is equal to everlasting love; and, is as extensive as the efficacy of the blood and sacrifice of Christ. It is commensurate with the grace and influence of the Holy Spirit. It is here expressed by the Lord God to sinners in the worst of cases; and that, as an act of the good pleasure of the will of the Divine Majesty unto them; *I will heal your backsliding.*

II. I will speak of the way and manner in which this grace is made known. *I will heal your backsliding.* This is here before us fully expressed by the Lord God, the Eternal Three in the one, true, living, and ever blessed Godhead. The Scriptures speak of sin as a disease; as containing every thing which can possibly be included under that term. And Christ is spoken of as the only Physician and Healer of such as are infected with, and are the subjects of this most tremendous malady. The account of the wounds he has healed, the diseases he has cured, and the continual virtue contained in his person, blood and righteousness, makes up one grand and material part of the everlasting gospel of his grace. He saith in the same, to each, and every one of his patients, who apply to him for health and cure, *I am the Lord that healeth thee.* Exod. xv. 26. And here in the text before us, he addresses backsliding Israel, thus: *I will heal your backsliding.* Now the manner in which this grace is received into the mind, so as to be made known in the heart, is now to be declared. The whole virtue of the blood of Christ is clearly revealed in the word, with all its present and everlasting efficacy. The Lord himself by his word, is pleased to speak to sinners in the word, and by the same; and that upon these very important subjects. I will give some clear Scriptures, as proofs of this. *For I will restore health unto thee,*

and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord, Jer. xxx. 17.—*Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.* Jer. xxxiii. 6.—*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.* Isaiah, xliii. 25.—*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.* Isaiah, xliv. 22.—*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Isaiah, i. 18. Now as the Holy Ghost is pleased to work with such Scriptures on the regenerate mind, he brings Christ and the sinner to a blessed meeting with each other; and, hereby the grace of pardoning mercy is received into the mind. Christ is received by the word of truth into the heart. And hereby such a sentence as this, *I will heal your backsliding*, comes with power and demonstration to the mind, so as to set it at liberty from all legal bondage. This is the way by which Christ makes himself known; when he is first pleased in a manifestative way to make himself known to sinners, belonging to the election of grace. He hereby falls upon their necks, kisses them with the kisses of his mouth, and says, *I have loved thee; I am your salvation.* And it is by the same

word of his grace, and in the reiteration of the same mercy to his backsliding ones, that they are recovered and brought back again to him. I add to this:

III. In what way, and by what means, they receive the inward sense and benefit thereof. *I will heal your backsliding.*

As the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to let in the knowledge of himself on the mind, so as for us to apprehend him, and the exceeding riches of his grace thereby; so it is in this way, and by this means, we receive an inward sense, and the actual benefit of the same. I conceive we cannot receive the balsamic virtue of the blood of Christ into our minds, but by the word. In the right apprehension of what is recorded and testified of the same therein: in receiving any of those Scriptures, which have been given as proofs of the Lord's speaking to sinners in his word, and by the very same to their hearts: it is hereby the Holy Ghost is pleased to bring their minds under the mighty power and authority of the same; and, thus they receive an inward sense of the same, and have the real benefit of it. Hereby they know God's everlasting love to their persons in Christ, their own salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, the free and full pardon of all their sins, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, their personal interest in him, and all the benefits and blessings of his great salvation, and per-

ceive the import, and have an inward sense and enjoyment of this great grace expressed in the words before us, *I will heal their backsliding.*

I come to my next head of discourse, which is,

Secondly—The freeness of God's love to his pardoned ones shall be taken notice of. This he is pleased thus to express, *I will love them freely.* What is contained in this, none but God himself can tell. The pardoned ones know how they are affected with it; yet, the grace contained in all this is only known to God. It is the Lord who speaks these words; and, it is he only who can fathom what is contained in them. *I will love them freely.* This is incomprehensible grace!

The former words were great, yet these exceed them, as the cause must for ever exceed the effect. They are not here expressed as the original of all the mercy in God, expressed in a variety of acts; but they come in, and are expressed as that which follows upon the revelation and manifestation of his pardoning mercy to his beloved ones. The love of God is the fountain and spring of mercy to the whole election of grace: neither is this to be overlooked here; yet, we will by no means go off our present subject, therefore we will only pursue the same. The Lord in the former part of the text, uttered his glorious voice, saying to backsliders, I will heal your backsliding; to this he adds, I will love you freely. This is full proof, that Israel

may well hope in the Lord: *for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* Psalm. cxxx. 7, 8. The expression, *I will love them freely*, coming in after the former declaration of grace, seems to imply, how most divinely the Lord would break forth in the manifestations of his love, to his forgiven ones, to his pardoned people: notwithstanding their backsliding from him; yet, they being restored by his royal, free, and pardoning mercy, he says, *I will love them freely;* yea, as fully and freely as if they had never sinned against me. My whole will is in this—I will love them as freely as if there had never been sin in them. This most assuredly is the truth of the assertion, and which is a most divine and solemn one. It is true blessedness to receive the same into our minds, with the most cordial acceptation and delight. I would, by way of simile, illustrate the subject thus: when we have had a very severe winter-season, and the vernal equinox is passed, the sun seems to shine with greater vigour upon us, than to our then present apprehensions it ever did before; so when any of us, who may have had our wintry seasons, and felt the evil of backsliding in heart and practice from the Lord, are restored from the same by the gracious influences of the word and spirit of Christ, upon us and within us; it seems to be with us, as if the sun of ever-

lasting righteousness shone with redoubled light and love upon us. And surely, this may serve in part to elucidate the words before us, *I will love them freely.* The will of Christ is in all the acts of his grace towards his beloved. It was in his healing their transgressions. It is in the continuation of his love, in all the freeness and perfection of the same unto them. You have here his whole heart: *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.* And the freeness of Christ's love is as great a subject, as the greatness of the same, and the continuation and perpetuity thereof. Who can say, what the love of Christ is to his beloved? the Apostle tells us, *it passeth knowledge.* It is an affection in his own vast and infinite mind. It is fixed immutably on the persons of his people. He loveth them at all times. He sticketh close unto them. Their changes, cases, and circumstances, make no change or alteration in him; yet, each and every one of these, gives occasion for him to administer the blessings of his love unto them. This sometimes he does by quickening their souls; at other times, in healing their sinful wounds; in pardoning their sins; in comforting them under manifold temptations; and, in being every thing to them they can possibly need. So that hereby they may through the teachings of the Holy Spirit, be clearly led to see and know, that he does not, nor ever will leave or forsake them.

It was an act of free love, wherewith he loved them, when the Father loved them in him, and gave them to him before the foundation of the world. It was his own free love to them, expressed by him, when in the full and intuitive knowledge of their whole sinfulness, in which they would be implunged by the fall of Adam, and their own actual transgressions, which put him on undertaking their cause, becoming their surety, and making his soul an offering for sin. He loved them freely; when he was made sin and a curse, and bore and sustained the whole of the Father's wrath due to their crimes. It is the very same love in the divine evidences of it, which he is here speaking of in the words before us. He having, out of his own will, and the good pleasure of the same, said, *I will heal their backsliding;* he will not stop here, but with another *I will;* says, *he will love them freely.* Surely this is grace beyond our uttermost conception; yet, it being spoken by the Lord, it ought most assuredly to be believed by us, and received into our minds; which if it is, we cannot but be divinely affected with, and swallowed up in soul-admiring thoughts at the exuberancy thereof. As the same is spoken to returning backsliders, it is a good proof of what the heart of Christ is towards them, the true knowledge of which must endear Christ unto them: and under the constraining influences of it, they cannot but cleave with full purpose of heart unto the Lord.

When it pleases the Lord to let his pardoned ones, hear his voice in this word of his grace, *I will love them freely*, it cannot but fill their minds with such apprehensions of the grace contained in Christ, as surpass the very uttermost of all they can express concerning it. Freeness is here added to love. This, in the case before us, is designed to express that there is nothing in the saints of the Most High God, which can ever abate the love of Christ towards them; neither what they were in Adam by the fall, nor what they are in their corrupt fallen nature received from him by natural generation, nor all the actual outbreakings of the same in their own persons and cases, can ever make the least change in the love of Christ unto them, as members of his *body, of his flesh, and of his bones.* These very words prove it; *I will love them freely.* This brings me to my last particular, which is this, to notice

Thirdly—The reason given for all this, both for the healing these backsliders, and loving them freely, is contained in these words, *For mine anger is turned away from him. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.*

We may safely say, the Lord God never hates his people for sin: yet, we may surely say he is angry with his professing people for it. To deny this, would be to set aside many direct assertions in the Scriptures, therefore this must not be.

Also it should be known, remembered, and acknowledged, that anger is not inconsistent with love. No, not with the everlasting love of God, to the persons of his elect in Christ Jesus. Should we say at any time, God hated his people for sin, we should tell a lie. God hates sin, all sin, and every sin in his people, yet he never hated the persons of his people for any, or for all the sinfulness which ever was, or will be in them; neither does God connive at any sin in them, whilst they are freely and fully saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; yet, it is all to the satisfaction and honor of law and justice, which have received at the hands of our divine Lord, strict satisfaction to all the demands of the law and the requirements of justice, a most complete and full atonement for all the sins of the elect. The anger of God as spoken of in the sacred page, expresses his holy aversion to, and just displeasure against sin and sinners. And this is expressed in his terrible judgments and righteous threatenings against the workers of iniquity. This the Lord was pleased in his dispensations toward the people of Israel to express. Sometimes by giving them over into the hand of their enemies; as was the case in the Jews captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon; and, is the case with the same people to the present day. When these people shall be visited by the Lord, and the grace contained in our text, be most fully exemplified

in them, the propriety of these expressions will most evidently appear, as the reason for the grace shewn unto them. *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* You have a proof of what I have been expressing in Psalm lxxxv, which celebrates the Lord's praise for the redemption of his people from Babylon. *Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.* verses, 1—4. As their restoration from Babylon was an outward removal of his wrath and anger toward them for national sin; so the restoration of the Jews in the latter day, will be unto them the same. They looking unto the Lord, praying over his own words, and he being gracious unto them at the voice of their cries, he says, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* This is most truly comfortable to any of us who are the Lord's. Whilst the whole, and all throughout this chapter, may be found upon the closest inspection, to belong to the people of Israel, and the promises concerning the glory, beauty, and excellency of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, in her open

and outward visibility of the same, to be a promise which will be fully displayed in the latter day; yet, we may most assuredly make use of the grace part of the whole, for our own profit and edification: no Scripture being of any private interpretation, so that it may not be said of it, this does not belong to the saints. Let us therefore, as the beloved of God, look up to the Holy Spirit, and invocate his blessing, unction, and presence, in our reading and meditating on the truths contained in it: some of which have been unfolded; and, by receiving the same into our minds, and mixing faith with them, must warm our hearts, and encourage us to look unto the Lord our *God, who is gracious and merciful:* let our cases, yea, our inward and backsliding cases, be as they may, or what they may, he says, *I will come and heal you.* Yea, if our cases, as a whole church, be all at this very time, what backsliding Israel's was, he saith to us, *I will heal your backslidings.* To have our wounds healed by the blood of Christ, and our consciences perfected in the peace of God, in the true apprehension that Christ is our peace, and that he hath made peace by the blood of his cross, this will save us from the guilt of sin, from the love of sin, from the power and dominion of sin. If we hear the voice of Christ saying to us, *I will love you freely,* this will warm our hearts through and through, we shall be fixed on him to our everlasting content,

to our perpetual joy and satisfaction. This, with the reason given, *For mine anger is turned away from him,* must yield unspeakable consolation to a believing mind. I am not insensible of the very many imperfections, which have accompanied me in the composing these papers; yet, being fully persuaded, that there are truths of great importance in them, I shall not object to the publication of the same. This verse ends that which I style, the second part of this chapter. May the Lord bless, if he pleases, what I have written: so that many whom I know not of, after I am in my body laid in the grave, and my soul being absent from it, and present with the Lord, may reap advantage and spiritual benefit from the same. To this I say, Lord Jesus. Amen.

SERMON V.

HOSEA XIV. v. 5.

I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

One of the most important things, which concern the being and the well-being of our souls, is

the true knowledge of the person, and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. From right apprehensions of the same, we are led from the word, and by the Spirit, into right conceptions of his love, mercy, and compassion, towards his church and people. By this, as the means, we are enabled to make some proper estimate of the dealings of our most beloved and gracious Lord towards his beloved, let their cases of body and mind be what they may. In the former verses of this chapter, we have had the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to his people, directing them how to act, and drawing up a form of prayer, on their behalf, and for their use. He sends them to his throne with it, which he is pleased to attend; it being the cry of his Holy Spirit in their hearts. It pleases him well to attend to the voice of their cry, and to which he returns a most complete answer, saying, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* Immediately the Lord utters a most comprehensive promise, and as connected with it, are many of the blessed fruits and effects of the same expressed. Sin being taken away, the fruit of this is the free pardon thereof, in the most beneficial and salutary effects of the same, brought home to the mind, and made known to the heart of the very sinners who had backslidden from God. The heart and eye of the Lord are towards them. His mouth is opened to speak good and

comfortable things unto them. He saith, *I will heal your backsliding.* The virtue of the sacrifice which perfects for ever, shall be displayed on your behalf. I will pardon all your sins and backsliding, freely and fully, for my great name's sake: in the which, you shall enjoy spiritual health and cure. I will shine upon and within you, with the refreshing beams of my mercy and good-will towards you. I will love you as freely as if you never had sinned against me; there shall be no more tokens of my displeasure remaining, *For mine anger is turned away from you.* This is most certainly the truth and subject of the verses which we have passed through. Here the Lord begins a new part of the same subject, as it respects the further expressions of everlasting love towards the Israel of God: *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* The next verse expresses the blessings which are further contained in this. Then the two following, the gracious consequence produced by the same. Then the chapter closes with a declaration, that it is true wisdom to know what the Lord hath spoken, and that it is a part of real godliness to delight in the same. There are in the fourth and fifth verses, no less than three *I wills. I will heal your backsliding. I will love you freely. I will be as the dew unto Israel.* These are all most closely connected together, and the one makes way for the other.

To know that the Lord's will is in all his acts of grace and kindness towards us, is the utmost which can be desired. Does he *heal our backslidings?* His will is in it. *I will heal your backsliding.* I will do it. Does he love us freely? His will is in it. Is he *as the dew unto Israel?* It is the good pleasure of God's will, to be *to his people all comprehended in this;* and, which is thus expressed in the word of grace now before us: *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* In my attempt to open and explain these words, I will attend to the following particulars:

First—The declaration and promise here given, *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* And open the metaphor here made use of, by way of elucidation.

Secondly—The sudden change produced by the fulfilment of this promise. *He shall grow as the lily;* which, as the effect of its being watered, suddenly sprouts up. This is also to be opened and explained, *He shall blossom, or grow as the lily.*

Thirdly—The establishment of Israel; or, Church of Christ, in this their flourishing condition. *He shall cast forth, or strike forth his roots as Lebanon.* Here also the symbol will be spoken of, and will be found to express, that what the Lord doth in, and for his church and saints, is not easily overturned with every blast of wind; this will open the words before us, which are these. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall*

grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. May the Lord assist me in going through each of these particulars, and crown the same with his own presence, Spirit, and blessing. Even so, O thou God of all grace. Amen.

I. I am to open and explain the declaration and promise here given. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* And open the metaphor made use of, by way of elucidation.

I would here observe, the fountain and spring of these words, originates from the former. The Lord says, *I will love them freely.* From this free love, it is his gracious pleasure to say, *I will be as the dew unto Israel,* which some interpret to be the promise of the Holy Ghost; certain it is, sin being taken away, and the Divine Father shining upon his church in Christ, is pleased to shed the Holy Ghost upon his people. We have an express passage to this purpose: Titus iii. 4—6. *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* It should be observed, the expression, *I will be as the dew unto Israel,* is indicative of divine sovereignty. Here is the will of God, expressed in the promise. What is the promise, but a free declaration of the

Lord's being to his church, what he here expresses? It is not founded on any thing in us; yet, it is suited exactly and completely to the case and need of the church. Tis an absolute promise, no way dependant upon the will of man, but upon the will of God; of whom the apostle James says, *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* chap. i. 17, 18. Now as the Holy Ghost is the great Efficient of all grace, in, and throughout the whole elect church of Christ; the application of the promise concerning him is not to be despised: and as his standing emblem in the Scriptures, is that of dew, rain, and water, so it may be acquiesced in. Be this as it may, it must be confessed the words are expressive of a confluence of all good; of the Lord's being to his church in his love and goodness, abundant and bountiful: also that he will in the communications of his presence, and blessings, exceed his people's uttermost expectation. The expressions are of themselves very sweet, suited to refresh the mind, to quiet the heart, to remove all sort and kind of fear, to excite faith and expectation, and to lead into real and open fellowship with the Lord our God. When he is pleased by them to speak home to the hearts of any of us,

and to shine in the spirit and power of them on our minds, we are most divinely quickened, refreshed, and strengthened. Then it is that we are watered with his graces and heavenly blessings. This is what he doth when he fulfils to us the following words of grace: *And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.* Ezek. xxxiv. 26. The Lord speaking here, by way of declaring himself in his grace and blessings to his people, says, *I will be as the dew unto Israel;* it is to express how pleasant, reviving, and fructifying, the influences of his word and Spirit are. With respect to the metaphor, God, Christ and the Spirit, may be considered under the same; the saints of God may be compared unto it: so may the truths of the everlasting gospel. In Scripture, things very delightful and refreshing are compared to dew: thus for instance, the king's favor is as dew: *The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but his favor is as dew upon the grass.* Prov. xix 12. When the soul prospers under the influences of God's word and Spirit; and, a person is under the blessing of the Lord, as it respects outward as well as spiritual prosperity, it may be said of him, the *dew* lies on his branches; as Job expresses himself: chap. xxix. 19. Unity amongst brethren is compared to the *dew of Hermon*, very reviving, delightful, and encourag-

ing to good works. Afflictions and sufferings are like dew and drops of the night. Hence Christ compares his sufferings to these; in the fifth chapter of the Song of Solomon, ver. 2. I have cast all this together, conceiving the opening the same afterward will be better than it might here. As it respects *dew*, "It is a thick vapour that falls on the earth, chiefly when the sun is below the horizon. In warm countries, where it seldom rains, *dews* do exceedingly refresh and fructify the earth. The fall of dew was reckoned by the Israelites, a great blessing, and the withholding of it, a grievous curse. The *dew* is first raised from the earth, heated by the sun; and, hence the lower bodies are first moistened, and bodies most hard share least of the *dew*. When so much is extracted, as the air cannot sufficiently poize, it falls back on the earth. When the air is corrupted with hurtful vapour, the *dew* is infected by it, and hence is formed the mildew, so injurious to corn and wheat." I will now by way of elucidation of the metaphor *dew*, "*I will be as the dew unto Israel*," say that we may well conceive all the divine persons in Godhead included in the term, and this as it respects their acts of grace, in the discoveries and manifestations of the same. So the words may be considered as spoken in the name of the Eternal Three, the Lord God, or Jehovah God. It is also very expressive of the Israel of God, at the very time

when this declaration, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, shall be most fully and openly accomplished. *And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.* Micah, 5. 7. Moses says, *My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass: because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.* Deut. xxxii. 2, 3. What can be conceived by this, but the everlasting gospel, its ordinances, graces, and blessings, and these as preached by holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost! Our Lord says to his Spouse, *my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*, referring to his sorrows and passions, all of which, were very salutary and beneficial to his church. Thus the metaphor before us, is designed to express how the church of God, and saints of the Most High, are refreshed by the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son, and the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost. He falling gradually and insensibly on the souls of the elect, they are most blessedly revived and refreshed; so as to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and made fruitful in every good word and work. Thus the Lord is pleased to set forth his sovereign good-will and pleasure to his saved

and pardoned ones, whom he loves freely, with all the love of his heart. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* Thus the sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, reviving and reinvigorating them by his grace, is set forth by the metaphor of *dew.* I go on to notice.

II. The sudden change produced by the fulfilment of this promise, *He shall grow as the lily;* which as the effect of its being watered, suddenly sprouts up. This is also to be opened and explained, *He shall blossom, or grow as the lily.*

Here is an expression used which regards spiritual growth. There can be no growth into Christ where he is not known; neither can this be, but by the grace and divine influences of the Holy Spirit. This being that which was contained in the declaration, *I will be as the dew unto Israel;* the effect of which, is a most sudden change in the church: she is watered, she shoots up tall, she aspires heaven-ward, she is in purity like the lily, she hath a quick growth. This will be the case and state of the visible church of God, in the latter day, when the Spirit shall be poured upon it from on high; the wilderness then will be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. When these words, and those also before us are accomplished, the Jews will be converted, and being reinstated in their own land, and embodied in a gospel church, the Lord then will

be in the midst, as the glory of it, as a wall of fire around it to protect and defend the same. Whilst I do not want to deprive myself and other saints from making use of this chapter, especially these and the following verses, for our own comfort, encouragement, benefit, and consolation, by any means; yet, I want to keep this in my eye, that whilst the Lord is, and will be to all his beloved all which he here declares, and they also shall be the subjects of all the grace here expressed; yet, I do wish this to be noticed, and closely attended unto, that the full perfection and accomplishment of the whole, will be realized in the state of the Jewish church in the latter day. Into which, the fulness of the Gentiles being brought, there will be but one Lord, and his name one. Then Christ will be a perpetual *dew* unto every real member of his mystic body. He will then so influence his whole church, that she shall shine forth openly, manifestatively, and influentially, as she has never yet done. There shall be a most glorious change in her. The freeness of God to her, in the person of Christ, shall be so gloriously reflected on her, and she so gloriously enlightened by the same, as surpasses our thoughts at present. She being thus brought under the mighty power, influence, and operation of the grace of the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, will have the rich and real experience of the Lord's being a *dew* unto her. A sudden change,

as the effect of this, will be produced in and throughout all her members. The heavenly influence shall promote her growth in spiritual things. The church shall grow as the lily. This is expressive of the quick growth of the Jewish Church at the latter day, when the effulgency of light bestowed on it, is thus expressed by the prophet Isaiah: *Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.* chap. xxx. 26. I will now aim to open and explain the metaphor, *He shall grow as the lily.* It should be noticed before I enter on the explanation, that it is not the church which is here represented and compared to a lily, it is the glorious and sudden change made by the grace of God in the church, is the subject here. It is her growth, her spiritual growth into Christ and spirituality. It is not *she is a lily*, or *she is like a lily*, no. It is, *He*, including the whole church, *shall grow as the lily.* In the Canticles, Christ compares his church to *the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley*, which hath but one *leaf*, formed in the manner of a bell, and of which there are seven kinds. But in the words before me, it is not the persons of the saints, but the graces of the saints, their growth and real spirituality is the subject; yet, some account of the

lily shall be given. Take it then as follows: "The lily is one of the principal flowers, it consists of six leaves formed in the shape of a bell; the *Pistil* is in the centre of the flower, and becomes an oblong and three cornered fruit, containing two rows of seed. The root is of a bulbous form. Lilies are very choice flowers, and many spring from one root. They are fragrant, comely, and medicinal, especially the roots of white lilies; they are excellent for softening and ripening swellings. Lilies were so plentiful in the land of Canaan, that some say they heated their ovens with withered ones. In some countries lilies grow to the height of four feet; but their neck is so weak that it can scarce support the head." The church in the Canticles, speaking of Christ, says, *My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.* chap. ii. 16, It is expressive of Christ feeding his church by his Spirit, and by his word, through the sweet, precious, and consolatory promises of the everlasting gospel. And these are delightful, healing, and fructifying to the souls of men, and will be very specially and particularly so, at the time of the conversion of the Jews, and their restoration to their own land, when they shall enjoy the blessings contained in the subject now before us. The lily is the next in nobility to the rose; it is so glorious and excellent, that our Lord says, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like

unto one of these. To this beautiful, fragrant, and medicinal flower, Christ is compared, he being most truly refreshing, beautiful, and fragrant to his church and people; and his church and people are compared also unto it; and the growth of the church in the latter day, is described by that of the lily, which is of a quick growth, of an erect form, and lifts its head heavenward. And thus under these symbols and metaphors, it pleased the Lord to set forth the glory of his church in the latter day. *He*, or it, *shall blossom as the lily;* so it is in the margin, which, as thus expressed, shewed how near it was to the fruit season. As the sudden change produced in the state and condition of the church, was expressed by its growing as the lily; so if we take in the marginal reading, and read the words thus, *he shall blossom as the lily*, it shews the very near approach of the church, to the time of her bringing forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. The blossoming or budding in our text, was expressive of glory, prosperity, and advancement in the church of Christ. As the flourishing and blossoming of Aaron's rod, expressed the lasting flourishing of the priesthood in his family, and the everlasting prosperity, flourishing, and fruitfulness, success and victory of Christ, in and by the gospel over his, and all the enemies of his church and people. The gospel is the rod of Christ's strength. The prosperity of the outward

and visible state of Christ's church, is here expressed, and compared to the *blossoming* of flowers and fields, as it is in the very text itself, in these words, *He shall grow as the lily*, it expresses the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost upon his church, and the immediate effect which followed thereupon. These produce immediate effects unto eternal life, such as cannot but be most clearly seen, and evidenced in the reality of the same. Are not these figures and expressions of the glory of the church of Christ, most noble and impressive? Surely they are. She is for purity and heavenly mindedness like the lily: for her spiritual growth, her quick growth in spirituality and visible form likened unto the lily. She is watered and nourished with the dew of heavenly and divine grace. She is increased with every spiritual gift and grace. She is fully possessed of, and inhabited by the Eternal Spirit: thus she is the habitation of God to dwell in. Of her the Lord says, *I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*, Hereby many other prophecies will be most divinely accomplished, such as these, which follow: *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice (together) for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and*

joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. Isaiah, lxv. 17—19. *And the name of the city from that day shall be, the Lord is there.* Ezek. xlviii. 35. Thus I have endeavoured to apply the expressions and figures in my text, to the outward visible glory of the church of the living God, in its state of perfection and blessedness in the last days, When *it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* Micah. iv. 1, 2. I proceed to my next head, which is this:

Thirdly—To speak of the establishment of Israel; or, church of Christ, in this flourishing condition. *He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Thus the strength of Christ's church, and the fixation and and firmness of the same, will be such as cannot be moved. *I will be as the dew unto Israel. He shall blossom; he shall grow as the lily; and cast, or strike forth his roots as Lebanon.* Christ and his church are in some Scriptures compared to Lebanon; and this, on account of their spiritual comeliness, and per-

petual verdure, for their fragrancy and fruitfulness. It is for such reasons as these, that the stability of the church is here expressed, thus: *He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Christ's countenance is said to be *as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.* Sol. Song. v. 15. According to Calmet, Mount Lebanon is shaped like a horse shoe, with its opening towards the north; it begins about ten miles from the Mediterranean Sea, northward in Syria, and runs south till almost over against Zidon, then turns eastward on the northern frontiers of Galilee, and lastly, turns northward as far as Laodicea in Syria. In Lebanon, it is said, four mountains rise, as it were, one above another. The first has a fruitful soil, excellent for wines. The second is barren. The third enjoys an almost perpetual spring. The fourth is often, but not always, covered with snow; the vines in the lower parts of it, and the cedars on the top of it, which were antiently very numerous, rendered it extremely beautiful and fragrant. Jerusalem and the Temple, are called *Lebanon,* because mostly built of the cedars of *Lebanon.* The houses of Jerusalem were so many and high, as to resemble the forest of Lebanon. The church in the last days is *to grow as the lily, and cast forth, or strike her roots as Lebanon.*

It should be observed, the whole of these words are an absolute promise. God's *I will,* runs

throughout them: it is *I will*, and *he shall;* nothing here depends on the creature. There is therefore an absolute certainty in them. It might not be amiss to consider them as a prophecy concerning the church, down to the very close of time. She shall be stable. She shall be immovably rooted in Christ. She shall strike her roots, so as to spread abroad, and greatly increase in numbers, beauty, honor, perfection, glory and excellency. Her roots like those of the trees of the forests of Lebanon, shall be strong and lasting, filled with perpetual sap, by which their strength will be continually increased. Thus the church will be as Lebanon, full of fragrancy and odour. We will sum up the outline and substance of what is contained in this verse, and hath been delivered as agreeable with the same .Here is in it a promise, or prophecy, call it which you please, concerning the church of Christ in the last days. The Lord will be as the *dew* unto her; she will be well nourished and cared for. The effect of this will be clear and evident, in her open form, revivification, and fruitfulness. She will grow up glorious and divinely beautiful, even to outward observance and view. Her purity will be like the lily; so will her growth also. She will be tall, and of a comely proportion, of excellent appearance, and upright stature, looking and aspiring heaven-ward. She will be full of life and spirituality. She will be strong in the

Lord and the power of his might. She will be fruitful in promoting her Lord's interest and truths, in publishing his gospel, and holding forth and abiding by his own institutions. She will not be moved from any of them; no, not in the least degree. Now for the text. Let what hath been spoken be compared with it, and then judge ye, if the outline given be not in substance agreeable with the same. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall blossom, he shall grow as the lily: and strike, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* Beloved, I have endeavoured to express the whole of it according to the best of my capacity, and I hope in the Lord for his blessing on the same, that it may be of some use and advantage to you. Whilst I have most assuredly directed myself and you, to consider them as very particularly descriptive of the glorious perfection of the church in a future period, when *the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and her God her glory;* yet, I have not omitted to intersperse here and there, observations to this effect, that we may, the Lord being our teacher, receive into our minds, such supports and consolations, as in our own particular cases we may require. The enlargement of the true church of Christ, is most distinctly hinted at and foretold, under these expressions, *He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, therefore it must

come to pass, and be completely accomplished. *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.* Dan. vii. 27. The ground of all this we have, in the 13th and 14th verses of the same chapter; the prophet says, *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* It is good for us to meditate on what the Lord God hath revealed in the Scriptures of truth. It is most blessed for us to enjoy communion with him in the belief of the same. And even as it respects the accomplishment of the prophecies, it is good for a man to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is in divine dispensations in a providential way, the Lord fulfils the prophecies. We are best employed, when agreeably to the sphere and station the Lord hath been pleased to place us in, we fill up the same, so as to glorify God according to the ability it hath pleased the Divine Majesty to bestow upon us. The Lord look

upon us, whose hearts he hath drawn towards himself, and so fix divine truth upon our minds, that we may see the glory of the same, and at all times and places, in all seasons, and upon all occasions, be under the influence and mighty authority of the same. May the Lord Jesus Christ be to us, as the dew unto Israel. May he cause us to grow as the lily; to cast forth our roots as Lebanon. May it be given unto us to mix faith with his word of promise; to receive the same thereby into our hearts; to grow into him in all things: so that we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

Blessed Lord! grant that it may be thus with us, for thy great Name's sake, Amen.

SERMON VI.

HOSEA XIV, v. 6.

His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

THE words of the present text are a continuation of the former; in the first part of them which has been sermonized, the Lord spake of the growth and strength of his church in time to

come, as growing in excellency as the lily, as casting forth its roots as *Lebanon;* so as to be strong and immoveable, and not to give place to mutation and decay; the consequence of which must be, the branches of the church could not but spread abroad, and this must be the enlargement of the cause and interest of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. If we read the former verse and this together, we shall the more clearly see the connexion of them; let this therefore be done. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* All which flows from the Lord's free love to his beloved ones: *I will love them freely.* In the former verse, we have the effect of the Lord's free love to his people; he was unto them as the dew: he poured out his Spirit on his church; this produced a sudden and glorious change, so that it sprang forth, and grew just as a watered lily doth, and by its taking root in Christ, it became established in him, and became in a good and flourishing condition, so as to cast forth its roots like *Lebanon,* and to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and in such circumstances, as not to be easily overturned with every blast of wind, or cunning craftiness of men, who might lie in wait to deceive; so in the present verse, the effects of the same love, expressed by the Lord to his Israel

who had backslidden from him, are further expressed in a promise of enlarging the Church, in making it glorious in itself, and of a sweet smell to others. As in the former, grace was expressed under the figures and terms of *dew, lily,* and *roots of Lebanon:* so in the present text, the free love of the Lord God, is set forth by the olive tree, and the sweet smell of Lebanon. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* The images made use of, to express and set forth the beauty and perfume of the church of Christ in the last days of the world, are most charming and delightful. The church is the same now in the person of Christ, it will be then: so that the true members of Christ may view themselves in Christ, and bless themselves as being blessed in him, and as truly complete in him, as any of his members in succeeding generations ever will be; yet, the church of Christ in her visible appearance, will more openly be glorious in that state of the church which is yet to take place: when she will be more, and further enlarged in numbers, and extent, in gifts and graces, in light and knowledge, and when the following promise shall receive its final accomplishment. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by*

the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Jer. xxxi. 31—34. It is then that the great head of the church, the great shepherd of the flock, the Lord Jesus Christ *shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.* Micah. v. 4. At this time there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. May the Lord most graciously assist me in opening and explaining the present text and subject, which I will endeavour to do in the following order:

First—In speaking concerning the enlargement of the church expressed in these words, *His branches shall spread.*

Secondly—The glory and beauty of the church as enlarged, is thus expressed, *and his beauty shall be as the olive tree,* which consists in its al-

ways continuing beautiful, it being *green, fruitful, and large.* This shall be opened and explained, that the figure here made use of, to express the glory of the church, be not lost.

Thirdly—The sweet savour of the church to others, which is a further enlargement of the church's perfection, *And his smell as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* May the Lord shine upon this most transcendant description of the church of Christ, in her glory and beauty in the latter day, and on our going over the words before us, which are descriptive of the same. Lord Jesus Christ grant us this favour and blessing, for thy great name's sake. Amen.

I. I am to speak concerning the enlargement of the church, as expressed in the words, *His branches shall spread.* I would here recite the former verse again, that its connexion with these words, and these with it, may not be overlooked and forgotten. *I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread.* As the establishment of the church was intended in the former figure, so as this stands in connexion with that, it must of necessity follow, that these *branches* must spring out of the *roots* of *Lebanon.* The roots of Lebanon were that part of the tree which fastened the same to

the earth, and in which the life of the tree is contained. To take root, to spread out the roots, is to be fixed; thus to be rooted and grounded in Christ, is to be firmly established in the knowledge of him, in the faith of him, and in an experience and confirmation of his truths. The branches of Lebanon were the sprouts of the stem of the tree, which yielded protection and shade, beauty and perfume, to the beholder. The trees of Lebanon and the branches on them must have made a most noble appearance: when they shook they must have made a considerable noise: as the branches spread and increased, their glory and dignity must more fully appear. Thus the church of Christ, as it shall be enlarged by the accession of Jews and Gentiles into it, is here set forth by these words; which express and contain the Lord's own declaration and promise concerning it. *His branches shall spread.* It must be so, *when a nation shall be born at once, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, when all Israel shall be saved, when from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, Jehovah's name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place, incense, saith the Lord, shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.* The following words also belong to the blessedness of the church, in members and grace,

in the future state of the church. *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.* Isaiah xlix, 22, 23. From these various Scriptures we may well adopt the words of the Psalmist and say, *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah:* This indeed deserves to be marked well. I will request these words may be attended unto. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from*

them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God. Ezek. xxxix. 25—29. Surely then, and by the conversions of multitudes, it will appear that the church being thus fruitful, it may well be added by us as a supplement, *his branch shall be green.* This would be expressive of the flourishing state and condition of the church. Green is the colour of flourishing grass. It is used as an emblem of pleasantness, prosperity, fruitfulness, grace, and comfort. When a number of souls are drawn to the Lord, it is an evidence of the church's prosperity; we esteem it so in the present day; it was so when, upon the immediate accession of our Lord Jesus Christ to his mediatorial throne in glory, and the descent of the Holy Ghost as the fruit thereof, on the apostles and preachers of the everlasting gospel, the Redeemer had the dew of his youth. This is set before us in the 110th Psalm: *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.* This received a most glorious accomplishment, though not its full and final one, on the day of Pentecost, when under Peter's sermon, three thousand were turned unto the Lord. And shortly after,

under another sermon delivered by *Peter* and *John*, five thousand were led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And after this, by the ministry of the apostles and others, the gospel being preached throughout the Roman empire, multitudes were turned unto the Lord, and churches formed, and the true ordinances of Christ attended unto. So it is still, yet not to that degree of prosperity which hath been heretofore. When antichrist is finally destroyed, the time for which is fixed in the will of God and will be effected by the spirit of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming, the Jews being called and made partakers of Christ's salvation; then the gospel will have an universal spread, and all kingdoms shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve and obey him. Then it will be found that what took place on the day of Pentecost, and in the apostolic day and age, and ever since, was, and is but a proof of that richer and riper harvest of elect souls to Christ, which will be brought into the church before the close of time. And surely the promises respecting the same, and the spiritual anticipation thereof, cannot but be very pleasant and acceptable to the spiritual mind. The church will greatly spread throughout the world in the latter day. This I apprehend is included in these words: the apostle says to the saints at Rome, congregated and embodied into a church state—*For I would not,*

brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Chap. xi. 25—29. The prophet *Zechariah*, speaking of the church in the latter day, says: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts: It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.* Chap. viii. 20—23. Thus I have gone through the first head of my present discourse—*His branches shall spread.* I proceed to my next particular.

II. The glory and beauty of the church, as thus enlarged, which is thus expressed—*And his beauty shall be as the olive tree*, which is always beautiful: it being *green*, *beautiful*, and *large*. This will be opened and explained, that the figure here made use of to express the beauty of the church, be not lost. In the former verse we had figures suitably to express and set before us the sudden, great, and glorious change wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit, agreeable to the will of the holy and immutable Three, in the church. From its very low and backsliding state, it was re-animated, invigorated, and renewed. This was so instantaneous that it is in the symbol of it compared to a lily for its sudden growth, which, being watered, suddenly sprouts forth. The establishment of the church as the effect of this, and her flourishing condition is expressed by the church's *casting forth her roots like Lebanon*, which must be to shew how she casts forth her roots downwards, whilst at the same time, she bears fruit upwards; all which being the fruit and effect of God's free love to her; so this love in the out-breaking and manifestations of the same towards, and upon her, makes her glorious in herself, and causes her to shine forth glorious in the view of others. She is always what she is in Christ, yet the present account here given of her does not so immediately refer to that, as to her open shine in

the sight and view of others, which will take place in the latter day state of her glory. Not that what the church is in Christ, or what Christ is unto the church, as the glory, ornament, splendour, and perfection of the same is the subject in the words before us; yet most certainly the majesty of the church in her outward shine and splendour, is the immediate subject. It must be acknowledged all this and much more than is here expressed, is but the reflection of the bright shine of Christ within her and upon her; so that the whole must be reflected back again upon him. This most justly is his due. The prophet, speaking on the subject of the future glory of the church of Christ amongst the Jews, says as follows: *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as*

the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. Isaiah lxii. 1—5. There needs no apology for citing the foremen-tioned Scriptures, as they most expressly belong to the state of the church at the very time when that which is expressed in the words of our text shall be realized in her and upon her. It is then her *beauty* will be as *the olive tree, and her smell as Lebanon.* Christ is now, ever has been, and ever will be, the glory, beauty, and perfection of his church. And she has been, is, and ever will be, the glory of Christ. The prophet *Isaiah,* speaking of Christ, in his union and relation to his church, and of some out-breaking of his grace and glory towards her, says, *In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.* chap. iv, 2. Jeremiah, speaking of Christ says, *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.* Chap. xxiii, 5, 6. Again, speaking of the glory of the church in the latter day, we read these words—*In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall exe-*

cute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16. All these passages refer to the state of the church in the latter day. The church enlarged, beautified, and adorned, will make a glorious figure in the world, so as to be an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations. The Lord says, his Israel's beauty shall be as the olive tree. The olive tree is full of a fat substance, which produces plenty of oil. The Scripture speaks of the wild olive, and the cultivated olive. This tree is of a moderate height; it thrives best in a sunny and warm soil; its trunk is knotty; its bark is smooth, and of an ash colour; its wood is solid and yellowish; its leaves are oblong, and almost like those of the willow, of a dark green colour on the upper side, and a whitish shade below. In the month of June, it puts forth white flowers, growing in bunches each of one piece, and widening towards the top, and dividing into four parts. After this flower succeeds the fruit, which is oblong and plump. It is first green, then pale, and when quite ripe, becomes black. Within it is inclosed a hard stone, filled with oblong seeds. Olive leaves were emblems of peace. The olive leaf brought to Noah, by the dove, was such. The door and posts of the entrance into the Holy of Holies in

Solomon's temple, and the posts of the door of the temple were of olive wood. The two cherubims which Solomon made for covering the ark, were of olive trees. See 1 Kings vi. 23. 31. 33. The prophet Zechariah had a vision of a golden candlestick, with its seven pipes and seven lamps, with a golden bowl upon the top thereof. He saw also two olive trees: these are styled the two anointed ones. To cast a little light on the same: observe that the candlestick was the symbol of the church; it was all of gold; by which was expressed its durability, purity, and excellency. From the bowl on the top of it, proceeded seven pipes; which conveyed the oil to the seven lamps, the flame of which illuminated its appearance. On each side of the bowl were seen the two olive trees, which emptied the golden oil out of themselves, for the supply of the golden candlestick. Read the fourth chapter of the prophet Zechariah. Christ is the true olive; he is the green olive tree; he is always flourishing; he has all contained in the fat, oily, limpid juice, and rich substance, called oil. The olive tree, yields the best and principal oil: it was made use of in the tabernacle. The Lord said to Moses, thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure olive oil, beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. Exod. xxvii. 2. Christ is the antitype of the golden candlestick. The Holy Ghost is in Him, and rests upon Him,

in all his sevenfold gifts and graces. And the beauty of the church in the verse before us is thus expressed: *His beauty shall be as the olive tree*, always green, flourishing, and full of sap; always fair and yielding fruit, good for ointment, food, and light. This is the figure and symbol, by which the beauty and glory of the church are set forth in its enlargement in that period which is to succeed the present. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* And thus I am brought to the last division of my text.

III. To take notice of the sweet savour of the church to others, which is a further increase and enlargement of the church's perfection. *His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.*

The whole perfection of the church, and every member of the same, is in Christ. She receives all her glory, beauty, excellence, and comeliness from him. She is what she is, as described in the words before us, through his comeliness put upon her, and no otherwise. One end and design of the account which is here given of her, is to exhibit the glory and greatness of her majestic appearance in the latter day; when being more immediately under the solar light and rays of the sun of everlasting righteousness, her glory will be more conspicuously seen. It is not that the saints then will be more glorious and complete

in Christ's person, holiness, righteousness, and sacrifice, than they are now; yet they will shine forth, and reflect the influence and truth of this, beyond what the saints of God do now; because they will be so immediately under the anointings of the Holy Ghost, that effects, proportionate with this, will be produced in them, and manifested by them. It would be well for us to keep this in view. I have endeavoured to impress this on the mind, in going over this subject again and again, that it is not so much what the church is in Christ, is the design of these prophecies, as the outward state of the church, in the open view of others. Not but what she is in Christ by election, and her union, interest, salvation, state, and blessedness, in the person of God-man, her head, and husband; is in the knowledge of it the life of her soul, and the joy of her heart: and is the sole and alone foundation of all which relates to the outward glory of the visible church, in that more glorious state of it in this our world than hath hitherto been manifested. We who live Christ, and are admitted by grace to enjoy communion with him, and the Father in him, through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, have in our own souls the essence of all the grace, which will ever be experienced by saints even at the close of time. I am speaking of inward communion with the Lord; in which it is that the Holy Ghost is most graciously

pleased to realize in our regenerated minds the love of the holy and blessed Trinity; and to give us such views and apprehensions of the same, as can never be exceeded this side heaven. When the Father shines upon us and shines within us, in the face of his anointed, and gives us to behold his glory in the person of Christ, we have then everlasting life in our souls. So when our Jesus is pleased to bless us with communion with himself, in true spiritual apprehensions of his person, love, and salvation, he hereby dwells in our hearts; and this as truly, yet not so fully as he will do when we are admitted into the state of glory. Thus also, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to give us the revelation of Christ in our minds, from the record which God hath given of his Son in the everlasting gospel; and this by his taking of the things of Christ and shewing the same unto us, and opening our spiritual faculties to receive the same; it is hereby we receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and grow into Christ, and into the knowledge of him, so as to be rooted, grounded, and established in him. These acts of grace will not be greater in the latter day, than they are in the souls of the called elect now; only that the number of the elect who will then be in this world, will be more numerous than they have ever yet been. The gospel will be more gloriously dispensed. There will be a greater effusion of the Holy Spirit's

gifts and graces, than has ever yet been since the apostles' times. There will be no errors, nor heresies; there will be a clear light given to the mind, so as to be clearly understood in what way, and by what means, the promises have been fulfilled. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, will be kept pure, agreeable to their institution, by Christ himself. There will be no gross outward sinners; all will be under the profession of gospel truth, gospel ordinances, and gospel order. The prophet says, *Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.* Isa. lx. 18. 20—22. And in those things which I have given the account of, will the superior excellency of the outward visible state of the church consist. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* The church is expressed as having a savour, a scent, and a good smell. *His smell as Lebanon.* The

vines in the lower parts of it, and the cedars on the top of it, rendered it extremely beautiful. It was a hill of perfume. It is made use of in the passage before us, as expressive of the sweet and most delightful perfume the church in the latter days will yield to others. This will, doubtless, be exemplified by the preaching of the everlasting gospel; the preachers of which, diffuse the knowledge of Christ by the same. The apostle speaking of himself and Timothy, says, *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.* 2 Cor. chap. ii. 15. It most certainly will be the glory of the church-state in the latter day, to be so perfumed with the knowledge of the love of Christ, as to distil the dews and fragrancy of the same on multitudes. I will collect the three former verses, with this as one of them, that you may have the more full comprehension of the vast grace contained in them, as I conceive the two next verses are expressive of the blessed effects which this sovereign, free, and glorious grace produces in the minds of those persons who are the subjects of it. *I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon: His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* The Lord being as the dew unto Israel, he grows as a lily; not as the fruit of creature exertion, but as the effect of sovereign and divine operation on the mind. This is evidenced and made most

openly and manifestatively to appear, by the spreading of Israel's branches, so that his beauty should openly appear, as the olive tree in his beauty; and his smell as Lebanon. What follows in the next two verses, contains the blessed fruits of this grace in its divine influences on the minds of such as were brought under the mighty power of omnipotent grace. I conceive the last verse of this chapter is the fourth part, as it also concludes the chapter. I now commit this discourse with all the infirmities which are in what has been delivered, to the Lord himself, for his blessing to accompany his own truth, so far as it is contained in what has been delivered. Amen.

SERMON VII.

HOSEA XIV, v. 7.

They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

IN the two former verses we have had an account of the beauty, establishment, glory, and flourishing state of the church of Christ, in the last day, or in its perfection, as it will shine forth

in the latter day of glory; with its increase and enlargement also. This with its fragrancy and sweet smell to others, is expressed by very significant figures and similitudes. The Lord declares, *He will be as the dew unto Israel,* which is said to be of more efficacy to the vegetable world than rain or other meteors. The sudden growth of the church is expressed by that of a *lily.* Its establishment in a flourishing condition is thus set forth. *He shall cast forth his roots like Lebanon.* The enlargement of the church-state is set forth thus: *His branches shall spread;* its glory and beauty shall be as *the olive tree,* which is always *green, fruitful,* and *large.* The acceptableness of the church to others who may be enquiring the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. The preaching of the gospel in it, yields a perfume to others. *His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.* The words of our present text include and express the blessings the church of Christ will be productive of to others. All that repair unto it, shall find refreshment, and peace of conscience. They shall revive as the corn; they shall grow as the vine; they shall be fragrant and full of perfume; so that they shall freely emit the same, and thereby be as the *wine of Lebanon, They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the*

wine of Lebanon. That I may open these words distinctly and clearly, I will cast them into the following division:

First. Who those are that are under his shadow, and what is to be understood by their return.

Second. Their revival on their having returned, and being under his shadow. This is described as the growth of corn, which shall be spoken of and explained.

Third. The growth of these is represented by the growth of the vine. This also shall be spoken of.

Fourth. The spiritual fragrancy of these, compared to the wine of Lebanon: what we are to understand by this will be set forth, and the similitude opened. May the Lord be very gracious unto me in going over these divisions. I shall place he Scriptures to each of them.

I. I am to set before you, who those are that are under his shadow, and what is to be understood by their return. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.*

We understand the shadow here spoken of, to be a protection, security, and defence, to those who are said to dwell under it, and who are spoken of, as returning to it. But what is the shadow? Is it Christ, or is it the visible church? This seems to require some consideration. A shadow literally is the representation which any solid body, interposing between the sun, or light,

and another body makes of itself. Christ and God in him, are the shadow and protection of the church. The prophet in an address to the Lord, says, *Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.* Isa. xxv. 4. The same prophet, in a prophecy which has direct reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, says, *And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.* Chap. xxxii. 2. And the safety of the whole church of the living God, as well now, as at a future period, is most fully expressed by the Psalmist thus, *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* Psalm xci. 1. We must therefore conclude that the Lord God himself, in all his persons and perfections, in his everlasting love, and covenant of free and sovereign grace, is the protection of his church. Whilst this is ultimately the truth of every Scripture, yet I conceive the church of God is the shadow meant in my text, to which those who dwell under the shade of the same return. My reasons are as follows: because the terms are the very same with those adopted in the two former verses. It is *his*: they that dwell *under his shadow*, which is so closely connected with—*He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots*

as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return. I say, I cannot see but it must be the church of Christ in the state she will be in, when her glory will be abundantly augmented by the increase of the Gentiles unto her, when it shall be said—*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* Isaiah lx. 1—3. As it therefore respects the church of Christ in its Philadelphian state, it will be a shadow and protection to those of the elect who are then to be called, and admitted into the same. It will reflect its influences far and wide. Those who are under the shadow of it, must be those, who, in a greater or less degree, have been permitted to have a spiritual sense and apprehension of the glory and dignity of the same. Hence the desire to be real and spiritual spectators of the good and blessedness thereof. Hence, under the influences of the Holy Ghost, the heavenly dew of grace, and under his sacred effects upon their minds, they are sweetly disposed to return unto the Lord, from whom they had revolted; and to his church from which they had

been scattered. And there is a word in the text which proves this will be effected by omnipotent grace. They that dwell under his shadow *shall* return. It is the Lord's *will* and *shall* that are to complete the return of those here spoken of. At the time, the whole of this chapter refers unto, will the following prophecies be fulfilled: *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinah, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.* See Isa. xi. 10—12. Thus these poor exiles shall return from the place where they have been scattered, and come together into the true church of Christ, under the spiritual reign of Christ; and there they shall be safe under his most divine care and protection: *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* This reminds me of the following Scriptures: *And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jeru-*

salem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain. Isaiah iv. 3—6. As I have considered the church of Christ, in the passage before us, to be the shadow here spoken of, and those who shall return unto her, to be those who have been scattered from her, and explained the same, so I would here admire the grace of God in all this. It is his own grace, which was displayed before all time, to love, and choose, and adopt such into his family, and call them. It is the same love, and remains the same towards them, in every state through which they pass in time. It is out of the same love he calls them, and makes his great salvation known unto them. And before the close of time, by the great acts of his grace, which he will openly display upon his elect amongst Jews and Gentiles, he will cause the whole world to be filled with his glory. He is pleased to express himself upon these subjects thus:—*For thus saith the Lord;*

sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden: and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with

my goodness, saith the Lord. Jeremiah xxxi. 7—14. The subject before us, beloved, is of vast importance; such as I am sure I am not by any means sufficient for; I therefore conceive, whoever he may be that reads this sermon, supposing him to have a spiritual view and relish for the subject, will find a majesty and glory, dignity and importance, cast upon the same, by means of the various Scriptures quoted; and will esteem them, because they contain the essence of the subject, and that by the *imprimatur* of Jehovah himself. Thus I have dispatched the first clause of the text, which is thus expressed: *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* I therefore proceed to my next particular, which is this—

II. To take notice of the revival of those who dwell under the shadow and protection of the church of the living God, and their return to it. This is expressed thus: *They shall revive as the corn,* they shall increase. I will recite the former part of the verse, together with these words, and then take notice of the figure, and so proceed. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn.* They shall blossom too; yet this comes not in here. As to the metaphor, *corn,* under this term, are comprehended wheat, barley, oats, rye, &c. After growing up in stalks, it forms into ears at the top, of different figures. When cut down by the sickle

it is bound into sheaves, and set up in shocks, that it may be sufficiently dried; then it is carried home to the barn, yard, or garner. When threshed out, and grinded into meal, it is a most strengthening food. Christ himself is spoken of as an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains. Psalm lxxii. 16. This may express him, and his gospel truths and ordinances; and these as preached by his apostles and others, and that to an eminent degree; and their remarkable success in the conversion of souls, and in the display of grace and good works in the hearts and lives of those who are brought under the almighty power and authority of the same. Our Lord speaks of himself and death, and the very blessed fruits of the same under this figure: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth fruit.* John xii. 24. In the words of our text, it is not Christ nor his passion and death, but it is the revival and spiritual growth of such as are returned to the church from which they had been scattered, is the subject. It is they *shall revive as the corn.* It is as the people of God are watered with the rain of the word and spirit, and are shined upon by the light and rays of the sun of righteousness, they recover from spiritual decay. It is hereby they revive as the corn. In the sacred word, both temporal and spiritual

blessings are set forth by corn. This is to express the necessity and usefulness of them, for the bodies and souls of men. *Manna* is called the *corn of heaven.* It came from heaven. It sustained the lives of the Israelites, as corn doth ours. Under the expression of corn, in the following passage, all the blessings of God's love and grace are contained. The prophet breaks forth in admiration at the exuberancy, saying, *For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful,* (*or grow, or speak,* so it is in the margin.) *and new wine the maids.* See Zechariah ix. 17. Twice in the year there fell plenty of rain in Judea, in the beginning of the civil year, about September or October, and half a year after, in the month of *Abib* or March, which was the first month of the ecclesiastical or holy year, whence it is called the latter rain in the first month. Joel ii. 25. The Lord, to show how one part of nature depends on another, is pleased to express himself thus: *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, &c.* Hosea ii. 21, 22. Rain is sometimes spoken symbolically, to express the word and spirit of the Lord, by which his church and saints are rendered fruitful. The sun shining on the same causes fructification. Christ is thus

spoken of: *And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. The Psalmist in an address to the Lord of all the earth, says, *Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.* Psalm lxv. 9, 10. Thus the church of Christ is renewed by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is revived by his gracious breathing. It is watered with showers of heavenly blessings. It is made fruitful by the river of God, and with the riches of grace, mercy, and truth, which flow down from the inexhaustible fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He arises on her as the sun of righteousness, with health and healing in his beams. This produceth most blessed and salutary effects. It is day when the Lord Christ thus shines forth upon it. This makes a spring indeed. This will be the case with the church, when, and at such times as her converts shall be innumerable; as countless as the drops of rain or dew. This will be a means of their reviving as the corn: *They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn.* This image is very

expressive of the fertility of those converts in whom the grace of God shall visibly shine forth, and the effects produced in them shall be beauty and comeliness. As corn, when revived by rain and sun, is glorious to the eye, and is a most striking display of the power of God, and his goodness to us his creatures. So the revival of the church, in the return of multitudes which had been scattered from her, will be a most acceptable sight. They shall revive as the corn, which flourishes and grows the better, and is the more acceptable in our view, after a long and hard winter. And thus having given you the best account of this part of my subject I could, I proceed to the next proposed head of the same, which is this:

III. To shew and set forth the growth of these converts, thus returned to the church; who, being received into it, and protected by it, and being hereby under the shadow of the same, are *revived as the corn, and grow as the vine:* or, as it is in the margin, *blossom. They shall blossom, or grow as the vine.* It is an absolute promise. No part of it depends on these persons, yet it is all to be fulfilled in them. That you may not lose the connexion, I will again recite the whole verse. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and blossom, and grow as the vine: the scent, or memorial, thereof, shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* I have put

the whole verse together, yet the latter clause will be reserved for the last head of this sermon. Our present words are these: *and grow as the vine.* The former words, *They shall revive as the corn,* are significant of the revival of those poor outcasts, who, by virtue of their personal and eternal union to Christ, although they had backslidden from him, and were scattered from his church, yet, they being in a day of his power brought back again to his fold, had found safety and protection in the glorious church of Jesus, where his true gospel was preached, and his own ordinances rightly observed; and he in them set forth, in his overwhelming sorrows, death, burial, and resurrection; and the manner of his crucifixion, death, and the everlasting efficacy of his oblation, solemnly recorded. There could not be a return to such a church, but it must be attended with some blessed effects; and what could these be, but a revival of their faith and spiritual frames? And how could this be better expressed, than by the figure of corn, which, remaining in the ground and dying under the clod for a season, springs up and bears much fruit? This must be followed with growth. Our Lord's description of it is this: *The earth bringeth forth fruit of itself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* Mark iv. 28. Let this then be attended unto. We have in the words before us a very regular account of the Lord's goodness and

work on the souls of these returning outcasts to the Lord. They dwell in the church, having, under the powerful influences of divine grace returned thither. They, under the shadow of the church, by the Holy Spirit's influences put forth in their souls, in the use and observance of his holy ordinances, *revive* as the *corn* doth, under the influence of the agency of the material heavens, fire, light, and air. This revivification makes way for their spiritual invigoration and growth; and this is thus expressed, *They shall grow as the vine.* In the margin, we have the word *blossom.* Christ styles himself the true vine. The church is compared in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to a vine. Wine is the blood of the grape. This is said to cheer the heart of God and man. See Judges ix. 13. The vine is a fruitful tree; it brings forth, and bears fruit in abundance. The cluster of grapes which the spies brought from *Eshcol,* was carried on a staff between two of them. See Numb. xiii. 23. The vine bears leaves, blossoms, and fruit. The persons spoken of in the words before us, are said to grow as the vine, which grows so as for its branches to extend,and to be greatly enlarged. Its blossoms are white, and yield a sweet smell. Both this plant and its fruit are very pleasing to the eye. The growth of the returned and escaped of Israel, is expressed by their blossoming, or growing as the vine. It hath no support

of its own. It must be planted, and pruned, and propped. The wood of the vine is good for nothing but the fire, if it be barren. Some of the best vines in the land of Judea, and vineyards, were at Engedi, otherwise called Hazazon-Tamar; it lay about thirty-seven miles south-east of Jerusalem, and at Baal-hamon which, it may be, was not far from it. The wines of Helbon, near Damascus, and of Lebanon, where the vines had a fine sun, were reckoned most excellent. For a proof of this see Ezekiel xxvii. 18, and Hosea xiv. 7, which is the verse we are now upon, and is expressed in these words, *the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* The church, as the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, is his peculiar care and charge: he says, *I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.* Isa. xxvii. 3. The redeemed of the Lord being gathered from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; out of all countries whither they have been driven in the cloudy and dark day, and brought back to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, and brought into his true church, and made partakers of the spiritual blessings, benefits, and privileges of the same. *They shall revive as the corn, and grow, or blossom, as the vine.* They shall greatly increase in the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. And this brings me to the last particular of our text, which is,

IV. The spiritual fragrancy of those who thus return to the Lord, which is thus expressed: *The scent, or memorial,* (for so it is in the margin), *shall be as the wine of Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow, or blossom, as the vine: the scent, or memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* Thus we have the church of Christ, in her open, visible state, in which she will then shine forth in all her gifts and graces. And this as watered with the gracious influences of the word, which will most abundantly refresh, revive, and re-invigorate her; together with the shine of Christ her heavenly Sun, who will warm and refresh her; so that she will be as the garden of the Lord; and joy and gladness shall be found in her, throughout all her members; thanksgiving and the voice of melody. So that the scent of the ransomed of the Lord, thus returned back to him, and revived and restored through his omnipotent, all-healing, and recovering grace, shall be acceptable to his divine majesty. And the knowledge of him and his doctrine shall be always pleasing and acceptable unto them. It shall be like excellent wine, to refresh and exhilarate them. It shall fill their mouths with laughter, and their tongues with singing; and God in Christ shall most freely and fully manifest himself to the whole church of his beloved ones. They shall be as a *memorial* unto

him. The word is expressive of that which tends to bring a person or thing to remembrance. The name Jehovah is his memorial throughout all generations. The shew-bread, and the frankincense put on it, are called a *memorial;* since they, as it were, prefigured the church in Christ, and as represented by Christ before the Father, and thus, in an ordinance-way, brought them in remembrance before God. Thus, as it respects these words, *The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon*, may be considered as very expressive of the knowledge of God and his everlasting gospel, that it will be always pleasant to his people; that it will be the means whereby they will be refreshed with the wine of the kingdom, as thereby they will be satisfied with real views and foretastes of the everlasting love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as it is reflected on the church and people of God, in the glorious person, work, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; in which the people of God have a perpetual memorial of his grace and good will unto them; and they, under right views, and in spiritual communion with the Lord in the same, emit a real fragrancy and perfume, *so as the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* It may be concluded this was most excellent. It is somewhat of a piece with what the spouse says in the Canticles: *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.*

Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee. Chap. i. 2. 4. Thus I have endeavoured, according to the uttermost of my capacity, to open and explain the expressions in my text, and have suggested how they may be conceived, both as applied to God, and to the church. *The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon:* perfuming, cheering, invigorating, and strengthening. As expressing on the part of God, that his people are always well-pleasing, acceptable, and a perfume to him: *That he rests in his love towards them, and joys over them with singing:* So that they are a memorial unto him. He loves the remembrance of them. He delights in exercising the thoughts of his mind in Christ Jesus towards and upon them. They are his dearly beloved ones. He rejoices in them, and over them, to do them good. And thus I close the present sermon: *They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and blossom, or grow as the vine: the memorial, or the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* May the Lord bless what is his own, and pardon what is mine. May he be pleased to shed his own light and truth on the reader, and bless the Scriptures I have been attempting to open and explain. And to his most holy name shall all the praise be given. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

HOSEA XIV, v. 8.

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with Idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

THESE words are the conclusion of the grace part of all contained in the former verses. In the three past verses, in the good will of the Lord God towards his church, we have had the effects of God's free love exemplified in the following blessings and favours bestowed upon her, manifested unto her, and realized in her.

First. In the sending the Holy Ghost, and shedding the sacred influences of his grace on her. This is expressed in these words, *I will be as the dew unto Israel.*

Second. The sudden and immediate change which would hereby be produced. *He shall grow as the lily.*

Third. The establishment of the church in this her flourishing condition, which is thus expressed: *He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon.*

Fourth. The enlargement of the church, which is expressed thus: *His branches shall spread.*

Fifth. The outward visible glory of the church, which is thus set forth: *His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.*

Sixth. The spiritual enjoyment and consolations such would be partakers of, who should, under the influences of grace, repair to this church; *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.*

Seventh. These shall bring forth acceptable fruit unto God, which is expressed thus: *They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.* Then having gone through these various particulars in the last sermons, we are, through the good hand of God upon us, brought to the words of our present text, which I will recite, that it may not be lost and swallowed up in the introduction to the same. They are as follows: *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.* In which we have—

I. Ephraim's absolute renunciation of all his former sins and carnal dependencies. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?*

II. The Lord's hearing Ephraim's prayers: *I have heard him.*

III. The Lord adds, *I have observed him.*

IV. The next words are, *I am like a green fir tree;* which some conceive to be the words of Ephraim; others, the words of Christ. Those who receive them as Ephraim's, think they are uttered by way of complaint. Those who apprehend them to be the words of Christ, consider them as containing strong consolation. I will consider them in this twofold point of view. These words, *From me is thy fruit found,* will be considered as the words of Christ; as expressive of Christ's producing from himself the fulness of all grace to his people, by the communications of his word and spirit to their minds, so as that they may abound in every good word and work. *From me is thy fruit found.* Whilst the substance of this plan of my text I shall aim to pursue, yet I conceive it will be with some little variation. As on a more minute investigation of the words, they seem to me to be all spoken by the Lord himself; they concern Ephraim, the ten tribes, who are included in the term *Israel;* and these the Lord hath been speaking unto throughout all the past verses, so I cannot but consider these words as a continuation of his own address, and further account of them: and that he is here giving a statement of the operation of his own grace within them, and upon them. I will enter on my first particular, which contains these words, Ephraim shall say, *What have I to do any more with Idols?* by which he declares his absolute renun-

ciation of all his former sins and carnal dependencies. This is the true portrait of a real penitent, and the genuine fruit and effect of that repentance which is unto life everlasting; only I shall enter on this head, by giving an account of them, in the first place, as spoken by the Lord of Ephraim. One annotator reads the words thus: *O Ephraim! what have I any more to do with idols?* Thou shalt join me no more with them, as thou hast done heretofore. I alone will be observed in mine ordinances, and worshipped in them, with thy whole heart. I am the Lord thy God, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Now as there is nothing in this explanation contrary to the doctrine of the text, nor to the analogy of faith, I see no reason why this may not be admitted, especially as the Lord God hath been the speaker in all the former parts of the chapter; as it respected the exhortation given for Israel to return to him: as also what Israel was to say and express before him; as also what the Lord would say in answer to his prayer; and in his declaration of what he would be to Israel, out of the exceeding riches of his grace; and what the church would be in her outward state, splendour, and visible glory. And our present text which contains the blessed fruits and effects of the same, seems to be the Lord's own words. This seems also to receive some confirmation, from the Lord himself taking up the words of Ephraim, and re-

peating the same in the 31st chapter of the prophet Jeremiah, together with his own most gracious reflection on the same, verses 18—20. The Lord there says, *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* To which the Lord rejoins, *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* These Scriptures of Jeremiah and Hosea coincide, so that the one serves to open the other. I will now consider the words of my text, as spoken by Ephraim, and containing an expression of his absolute renunciation of all his former sins and carnal dependencies. This was the fruit which could not but follow, upon the free and full forgiveness of all his transgressions. This the Lord had most absolutely spoken in these words, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.* v. 4. This was grace indeed; such as can never be fully estimated. None but backsliders can feel the same sensibly and apprehensively;

they only can express their sense and feeling of it. It made a wonderful and lasting impression on those unto whom the Lord spoke it; and what it produced in them is here in a most lively manner described; *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols.* This is the very genuine fruit and effect produced by the revelation and manifestation of the pardoning grace and mercy of God to the mind. The true apprehension and believing sense of the same, is the producing cause of that repentance which is unto eternal life. It is a wrong notion entertained by some, who are no great admirers of the open displays of free sovereign grace, that the free reception of the same will prevent sorrow for sin, and that walk with God which becomes such as are the pardoned ones of God. The instance before us is a full confutation of this. That which brought Ephraim to say, *what have I to do any more with idols,* was God's free pardoning mercy. And this as brought home to his ear and heart, and that by the Lord himself. *I will heal your backslidings.* This is grace Ephraim cannot stand up under. It bears down all his guilt, his sin, and subdues the power and strength of his corruption in the whole body of it. *I will love you freely.* This is most divinely transporting! it is almighty and omnipotent love, which carries all before it, by the omnipotent sweetness contained in the same. None of all the saints on earth,

in and throughout all the churches of Christ in the whole world, can conceive, much less speak out, what is contained in this very simple expression. Jesus Christ looks upon his people with all the love of his heart, with all the freeness and warmth of the same. This melts the hearts of such as he thus freely shines upon. It turns their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He gives his reason for so doing: *For mine anger is turned away from you.* And this is a most effectual antidote to their guilty mind. It is this turns them most truly in heart and affection back again to the Lord, who, breaking forth in a manifestative way upon them, agreeably unto these expressions of his glorious grace, so that hereby their renewed minds are brought under the mighty power, authority, majesty, and weight of this surprising grace; Ephraim, backsliding Israel cries out, *What have I to do any more with idols.* If we retain the supplementary words in our text, *shall say*, then we shall have the glory of God's grace very clearly developed, as the reason why Ephraim cried out, and thus expressed himself before the Lord; and from the same we may fetch an argument, that the words are the Lord's, and that he is here speaking out the heart of Ephraim, for him. And this well coincides with the passage which was quoted out of Jeremiah, in which the Lord declares how he had heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. In

these expressions, *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* These as applied to Ephraim contain the language of a true repenting sinner. They are most exactly suited to poor returning prodigals. In them is contained an absolute renunciation of all former sins, and all sorts of carnal dependencies. It is agreeable with the request the Lord had put into the mouth of backsliding Israel, to express before him, the Lord of all the earth. *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips; Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy*, v. 2, 3. And the Lord having vouchsafed a most gracious answer, Ephraim here says, *What have I to do any more with idols?* In true godly sorrow for sin, a confession of the same is contained. A renouncing of all self-confidence is a part of the same: also a full purpose of heart not to turn again to folly; and a thorough reliance on the person and work of salvation, by our Lord Jesus Christ. When we have true views of our Lord Jesus Christ, and receive into our minds from the gospel, right believing views of his love, and the virtue and efficacy of his blood and righteousness, this is the very foundation of our repentance and return to the Lord; it is the real knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, which fixes our faith and hope

in him. We leave sin, having found in Christ the free and irrevocable pardon of it. We hate it, because it is contrary to the holiness of Jesus. We are above the practice of the same, having found that in Christ which everlastingly exceeds all the joys of time and sense. Thus it was with Ephraim; he was under the emanations of the divine favour, the shine of everlasting love, and the manifestations of pardoning mercy. Thus, as I conceive, you have the substance of what was proposed under the first head of this discourse, and I will proceed to my next particular, which is this:

II. To speak of the Lord's hearing Ephraim. The Lord says, *I have heard him.* I will repeat the former words, and unite them with these, that the connexion may not be dropped. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him.* The words I am now to explain are these. *I have heard him.* These are the words of the Lord; they are spoken by Him to Ephraim. They are suited to what he had been speaking. They are expressive of the Lord's being well-pleased with what Ephraim had uttered: *What have I to do any more with idols?* To which the Lord adds, by the prophet, *I have heard him, and observed him.* The latter part of these words is not to come into the present head, but into the succeeding one. At present, this is the sentence to be spoken of, *I have heard him.*

It is very expressive of the attention the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased to pay to the prayer and supplications of his mourning ones. The Psalmist says, *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Here we have a full proof of it. Ephraim had bemoaned himself; he had confessed his transgressions unto the Lord; he had spoken out his contrition; he had renounced his former sins; he had rejected every false confidence. All which was the fruit of the Lord's royal grace and mercy, made known by his own declaration of grace, and the bringing it home by power and demonstration to the mind. All which the Lord takes notice of, and says, *I have heard him.* The eye of the Lord is upon his people. His ear is open to their cry. He views every outgoing of their hearts towards him. He takes notice of every motion of their will and affection to him. We have him in the word of his grace, saying, *Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.* Jer. ii. 2. This is surprising grace, yet we have the warrant of the Lord's own word for believing, that there is not one single outgoing of the mind towards the Lord Jesus Christ, but he most graciously notices the same. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* The Lord hears this, and immediately rejoins, *I have heard him.* This also implied the Lord would answer

Ephraim's prayer. His hearing and hearkening unto the prayers of his people is a token of his gracious acceptation of them, as also of his answer to the same, by granting their request. The words are full of encouragement; and, as they are a prophecy, of the display of the grace of the Eternal Three, through the medium of the glorious mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ: so when the Lord shall break forth in such displays of grace, in the spiritual reign of Christ, it will fill the world with wonder and admiration. I have here again to repeat it, we are not to exclude ourselves, in our own individual persons and cases from the participation of the grace contained in this chapter, because it most immediately belongs to the Jews in time to come. No; the Scripture saith, *Whosoever believeth on Jesus, shall not be ashamed.* For in this view of the subject, *there is no difference between the believing Jew and the believing Gentile; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.* We may, through the grace of the Eternal Spirit, derive strength and consolation to our own souls, in believing and receiving into our own minds, the knowledge and right apprehension of the freeness and exceeding riches of grace, which are spoken of, revealed, and recorded in this chapter. I go on to the next particular:

III. To notice what the Lord adds to his former words, it is this: *I have observed him.* I will

recite afresh the foregoing particulars, which we have been, and still are aiming to cast light upon, by setting forth the same in their order and connexion. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* First, we have Israel's repentance. Second, we have the Lord's attention to Israel's prayer, *I have heard him.* We have gone through each of these particulars; we come now to the Third, which is thus expressed: *I have observed him.* As the former, *I have heard him*, is most truly applicatory to the Lord's hearing and answering Israel's or Ephraim's prayer, the question is this: to what can the present partition of these words, *I have observed him*, better apply, than to the providential dealings of God, towards his returning people; and this, as it may have regard to his church, both in grace and as it respects his dealings with them, in their temporal affairs, as well as in their spiritual. If I make a particular separation of these words from the former, I do not see at present any better *observance*, to arise from the words themselves. I will again go over the outline, that the premises may be the more clear. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* Then the Lord speaks; he says, *I have heard him.* To this he most graciously adds, *I have observed him.* Now if any division is made, and we swallow not up this sentence with the former, I ask, what better division can we make, than by treating this as

the third part of what has been expressed in the words themselves? so that the first part contains Ephraim's confession; the second, God's most gracious notice of the same, *I have heard him:* and the third, *I have observed him.* How can I explain this, but of the gracious acts and providences of the Lord exercised on his church and people? *I have observed him.* The former words were very expressive of his great attention to his Israel, and the voice of Israel's cry: as these are very significant of his remembrance of the same, *I have heard him.* Here it is, *I have observed him,* which may most certainly imply the continual attention the Lord is pleased to exercise in his mind, thoughts, care, and concerns for his church, and each of the individuals whom he hath loved with an everlasting love. The words most certainly imply the views the Lord took into his own vast mind, concerning the persons, the cases, and every circumstance of his beloved ones. He is well pleased to observe them, under the influences of his grace, and teachings of his Holy Spirit: how they speak, what they speak, and how they are disposed to walk with him, and before him, and triumph in his glorious praise. *I have observed him.* It refers to these particulars which have been mentioned. The free grace of God in Christ, having, in the influential efficacy of the same, been made known by himself to his backsliding people, and

their whole disease healed and effectually cured thereby, this operating on them, and they being brought under the mighty power and grace of the same, their mouths are opened. They are ready with their confessions; all which the Lord here testifies his acceptance of; he says, *I have heard:* that is, their prayers. *I have observed him:* that is, he is so and so influenced with the knowledge and manifestations of God's free grace to his mind, that his heart and affections are suitably affected, and drawn out after him by the same. I will fulfil in him all the good pleasure of my will, and the work of faith with power. Mine eye is upon him for good. I will be gracious at the voice of his cry. He is my dear son. He is my pleasant child. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. *I will rejoice over you with my whole heart, and with my soul. I have observed him. I will never turn away from him from doing him good. I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.* As the providence of God, in the fulfilment of his most gracious promise of grace and truth unto them, will be most fully manifested unto them in the latter day state of the church; so we may include the same, as couched in this passage, *I have observed him.* And thus I pass on to the next words before us.

IV. Which are, *I am like a green fir tree.* Some conceive these to be the words of Ephraim, others consider them to be the words of Christ. Those

who receive the idea that they are Ephraim's, think they are uttered by way of complaint. Those who apprehend them to be the words of Christ, consider them as containing strong consolation. I shall consider them in this two-fold point of view. *I am like a green fir tree.* I will first attend to the image and symbol made use of. The fir tree grows to a great height; it is very straight and plain below; it abounds with gum called rosin; and is green both summer and winter. Its fruit somewhat resembles a pine-apple, but is useless. The wood of the fir tree was anciently used for musical instruments, buildings, furniture of houses, and for ships. Jesus Christ resembles, and may be set forth by *a green fir tree.* He being comely and glorious in his person, as God-Man, as Head, Mediator, Saviour, and Friend of his church and people. He may be compared to a *fir tree,* for his height and dominion, for his unfading and beautiful appearance, for the durability of his office; and he may be compared to a *green fir tree,* he being a root of perpetual and fructifying influences to his church and people. His saints are likened to *fir trees,* because of their spiritual moisture, and growth in grace: see Isa. xli. 19; chap. lv. 13; and chap lx. 13. So also the ordinances, beams and rafters of the church of Christ, are compared to fir, in the Song of Solomon. The church says, *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters*

of fir, chap. i. 17. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him. I am like a green fir tree.* These words, *I am like a green fir tree*, are considered as a dialogue between the church and Christ. He had been speaking good and gracious words concerning her. She cannot stand up under the full impression of the same. She does not deny that his glorious grace had been most richly displayed towards her, and shed most richly upon her; yet, she blushes at her own unworthiness, and the little fruit she brought forth to the praise and glory of God's free grace; therefore Ephraim compares himself to a green fir tree, there being no useful fruit on it. There are leaves, sap, and constant circulation in it, but the fruit is nothing worth. Thus, as is conceived by some, the church is here bewailing her barrenness, that she is all profession; beautiful and promising in her appearance; yet so far from being fruitful in every good work, she is, in her own apprehension, very unfruitful in these. To which these words, which they ascribe to Christ, are opposed, *From me is thy fruit found.* And from them the church's consolation is derived, under the views she hath of her own nothingness and unfruitfulness. Hence it hath been, and very usually is the case, to make use of these last words, as a relief to the minds of such as

are thus expressing their complaints under such form of words, *I am like a green fir tree.* To such we commonly reply, as the speech of Christ himself, and by way of special relief and antidote, *From me is thy fruit found.* Others who conceive the whole respects Christ himself, observe Christ is here speaking, so as to encourage sinners to take shelter and refuge in him, as the green fir tree. The storks are unclean birds; they built their nests in the land of Canaan, in fir trees. Hence the Psalmist says, *As for the stork, the fir trees are her house.* Psalm civ. 17. So Christ the Saviour is a place of refuge and shelter for unclean sinners. *This is agreeable to* what is said of him, *And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.* As there will be a most glorious dispensation of Christ, in the ministry of the gospel in the spiritual reign of Christ, in the day when the whole of what is contained in this prophecy, will receive its most full and complete accomplishment, this application of the words, that Christ is speaking in them to sinners, for whom he died; encourages them who are awakened by his word and spirit, to take shelter in Him; he being an accessible Saviour, always one and the same, in whom is perpetual life and vigour, salvation, righteousness, and strength. He is the common resting-place and centre for

all weary and heavy-laden sinners. He saith, *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.* The stork is a bird of passage: so when sinners fly and flock to Christ, they leave the state they have been in, and betake themselves to the Lord for deliverance from the same. The substance of which, the Apostle says of the believers of Christ at Thessalonica, who, through the mighty power by which the gospel was sent unto them, *turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God. And to wait for his Son from heaven, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come.* With respect to the words before us, if we apply them wholly to Christ, and omit all other interpretations, the substance of them, *I am like a green fir tree,* implies what he is in himself to his beloved people. He is full of perpetual vigour; he is everlasting life; he is invariably the same, in his union and relation, and oneness with his people. He is to them always one and the same, so that under the true knowledge thereof, they have at all times the same right of free access unto him. They were in him from everlasting. In him they have always been one and the same, in the eye and view of their Heavenly Father. They have flourished in him, whatsoever decays they may have experienced within themselves. Their present and everlasting all, is now and evermore dependant

on him, and what he is to them, and on what he hath done for them; and by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. He saying, *I am like a green fir tree,* implies, that it is out of his infinite fulness, all the wants of his people are to be supplied: all the graces of his people are to be maintained: all the blessings of the Father's everlasting love, are to be continued: and all the benefits of his great salvation are to be imparted. *I am like a green fir tree.* able to save to the uttermost. To raise up the church above and beyond all discouragements. To bestow all the blessings of life everlasting in the enjoyment and continuation of them, for ever and ever. Thus I have given a two-fold explanation of the words, according to what I proposed, and also some additions to the same. And now I come to these words, *From me is thy fruit found.* These are the words of Christ; they seem to be spoken by him for the encouragement of his church. They most certainly carry in them the idea, the church was looking to herself, and within herself, for that which alone is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is securing the whole glory of all contained in this chapter to him, whose name is exalted above all blessing and praise. All the vast designs of God, in Christ, God-man, and as they were to shine forth in his headship and mediatorship, fully proves it hath

pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. So that all the grace spoken of, in, and throughout the whole of this chapter, in the full and free pardon of all the backslidings of the church, in the Lord's being unto her as dew unto Israel; in her growth, beauty, and establishment; in her increase, and flourishing state and condition: even to her revival, growth, and scent, as the wine of Lebanon, is the grace of the Holy Three, manifested in the person of Christ, and flowing forth upon the church of God, from the inexhaustible fulness of the Lord Jesus. He is the green fir tree: he says, *From me is thy fruit found.* It is as he looks upon us, and holds communion with us, that he produces all those fruits and effects of grace, in our souls which we are favoured with; so that the church may well say, now and evermore, in each and every one of her individuals, *All my springs are in thee.* May the Lord bless what hath been delivered, if he please. Amen.

SERMON IX.

HOSEA XIV, v. 9.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

WE have had *the Lord God of Israel*, speaking to his backsliding Israel, in the chapter of which we are now come to the close. He has been calling upon them to return to him, which hath been expressed in words supremely glorious, and altogether suited to the sovereignty and greatness of his own grace, and their peculiar cases. The Lord's answer to their requests hath been given. From the fifth to the eighth verse inclusive, the Lord is pleased in the greatness and exuberancy of his grace, to speak out most divinely unto his pardoned ones, declaring what he would be to his church, and how it should grow, increase, branch forth, be beautiful, and of sweet perfume: a shelter and protection to all who should come into it, and take their places therein. An account is also given of the blessed

effects which would be produced in poor backsliding Ephraim, in consequence of the fulfilment of these exceeding great and precious promises. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with idols?* This was so acceptable to the Lord, that he is pleased to say, *I have heard him; I have observed him;* upon which he condescends to declare himself to Ephraim thus: *I am like a green fir tree,* which considered as tall, comely, and glorious, may be symbolical of Christ. And no doubt but it is very emphatically expressed of him, and may direct to the person and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. A green fir tree may serve to denote the protection Christ is to all poor sinners, who fly and take shelter in him. Our Lord is pleased to add this to comfort Ephraim, *From me is thy fruit found.* These words are very comfortable to such of the Lord's beloved ones, as are mourning and complaining on account of their barrenness and spiritual unfruitfulness. *In me,* says Jesus, *is thy fruit found.* No fruit can be produced in us, but by the life which Christ is pleased to impart and communicate. There must be union unto Christ and his church, before there can be any communion with him. It is only such who are one with Christ, who partake of the spirit of Christ. The bond of union between Christ and his church, is founded on the Father's everlasting love. Christ, in union with his church, as the head thereof, re-

presented them in election. So also in the foreviews of their fall in Adam, Christ their head, undertook, with the divine Father, to raise them up, above, and beyond the whole of it, by his open incarnation, obedience, and death. Having accomplished this, he is pleased to send his Holy Spirit into their hearts, to form them by regeneration for his praise. Thus he makes known himself unto them, and most graciously holds communion with them. Some glimpses of these things have been taken, as we have gone over the foregoing verses. We are now brought to the close of the chapter; it ends with this, which is solemnly important and impressive, concerning the spiritual, practical, and experimental use of the preceding subject. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* These words contain a promise; as so considered they are the Lord's: they contain a declaration, in which a prophetic hint is given, concerning who those are who shall make a wise use, and prudent account of the Lord's most gracious dealings and conduct towards his people; and who those are who will not. In order to speak out all that I apprehend to be the full meaning of them, I will cast the substance of the same into the following particulars:

First. That the substance of what is contained in spiritual wisdom and prudence, is to understand and know the Lord in his ways and dealings with his people, as they have been expressed in the former part of this chapter. *Who is wise and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?*

Second. The ways, the acts, and the exercise of the Lord's will, throughout all his dispensations, in his people, towards and upon them, are all good and worthy of his glorious Majesty. *For the ways of the Lord are right.*

Third. So that the Lord's people have a real delight to walk in them. This is expressed thus: *and the just shall walk in them.* This also implies perseverance in the same.

Fourth. These things are a stumbling block to the wicked. *But the transgressors shall fall therein.* It may be regarded as a prophecy of what will be the case of such, even in the last days, who are not enlightened with the light of everlasting life. And thus ends this vastly important chapter. May the Lord most graciously be pleased to enable me to open each of these particulars, so as thereby to convey suited instruction to the minds of those who shall read this. In a real dependance on the Lord for his blessing and presence, I proceed to enter on my first division of the present subject.

I. That this is the substance of all contained in

spiritual wisdom and prudence, to understand and know the Lord, in his ways and dealings with his people, as they have been expressed in the former part of this chapter. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?* The words are put in the form of a question. The design of their being thus spoken must be to arrest the attention, and prepare for a right answer: suggesting it requires the utmost attention of the mind to study and contemplate them. Reference is here made to what had been antecedently expressed, so that these words, *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* must be connected with that which went *before*; and thence it will be found the whole contained in the chapter must be involved and included herein. So that the *wisdom* and *prudence* here spoken of must be considered as spiritual, such as is apprehensive of heavenly, eternal, and important matters. The words *wise* and *prudent,* in the sense here used, may be to shew that such as have, by the Lord's light and teaching, a true intuitive knowledge of *the truth as it is in Jesus,* have also a spiritual *prudence* and discretion in their delivering out the same; and, that both joined together, serve to display the glory and excellency of heavenly and divine truth. The Apostle prayed for the saints at Colosse, that they might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. He says to

the saints at Ephesus, that the Lord had abounded towards them in all *wisdom* and *prudence*, which two words seem to be employed to set forth the exuberancy of the same. To understand and know the Lord, is the substance of all contained in spiritual wisdom and prudence. This will be most readily confessed by us; as also that these words must be considered as in connexion with all the foregoing verses, and must, of necessity, be understood as including the knowledge of the Lord, in his ways and dealings with his people, as they have been before expressed in this chapter, *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* The natural inference cannot but be this: that such as were endued with spiritual knowledge, to understand the grace contained in the foregoing particulars, in which it had pleased the Lord so abundantly to open and express the good pleasure of his will towards his elect and beloved ones, should be blessed by the same. And it is a mercy and blessing of vast importance, to receive into the mind the knowledge of God, in his love and acts of everlasting kindness towards his elect in Christ. We may here, and, doubtless, ought to restrict the subject to the Lord's dealing with the elect of Israel on their return to him in the latter day glory state of the church; and to the fulfilment of his declarations of the glory and beauty he will then put upon them; of their honour and renown; of their increase and per-

fection; purity, holiness, happiness, security, and enjoyment of all good they will then partake of. No doubt can be entertained but these are the things pointed at, when it is here said, *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* It may also be expressive of the expectation the former verses raised in the mind of the wise in heart, who understand knowledge, to look for fulfilment of all the grace contained in the revelation of the same, towards and upon the Jews in the latter day. Here is also annexed a promise, to such as are wise in the things of God: *he shall understand these things.* It may imply, that in proportion as time hastens on the accomplishment of the same, light will be given, knowledge will be increased, and clear views will be so let in on some spiritual minds, as that the Scriptures on these subjects will be most fully opened, and comprehensively received. *Whoso is prudent,* and properly intellectual, shall know the Lord's revealed will so clearly in these matters, that by the same, whether he lives to see the real accomplishment of it or not, yet his heart shall rejoice in the foreviews thereof. To pass from this to another view of the subject before us: it has been the course of my pursuit through the whole of these Lectures, not to confine them exclusively to what they may particularly relate, but to intersperse here and there reflections which may be useful unto us; so that in this

place I would suggest, that the knowledge of the Lord, in his ways and dealings with his people, in the dispensations of his providence, his acts of grace, and communion with them, are subjects suited to the study and contemplation of the spiritual mind; it may therefore be said, *who is wise?* Who considers God in the revelation of himself in the person of Christ, as made known in the Scriptures of Truth? Who is he that is enlightened into the knowledge of the Father's everlasting love to the person of Christ, and to the persons of the elect in him? Who is wise in the knowledge of what Christ is to the elect; of his twofold relation to them as their eternal head, in whom as such, all the blessings suited to the character he sustains are treasured up? And who knows Christ as standing in a second relation unto them, that of a Saviour; and as having obtained eternal redemption for them; all the blessings of which are contained in his immense fulness? Who is wise in these mysteries of grace, and he shall have such gospel apprehensions of the same, as will conduce greatly to his spiritual advantage? It is hereby his spirituality, and spiritual communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be promoted and increased. *He who is wise, shall understand these things*, how the Lord is pleased to deal with his people; in what way, and by what means he restores and recovers them from such a state! how he makes known

to them his pardoning mercy, and thereby overcomes them with his free and royal mercy! Such an one *shall* have such clear and intuitive knowledge of the same, as shall tend to his own spiritual edification. The text seems to contain a promise that thus it shall be. The word *shall* is to me an evidence of this: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* so as to make a spiritual improvement upon them; and thereby become better acquainted with the Lord in the dispensations of his will; in his providential dispensations, and gracious manifestations, and in the communications of his presence, and the good pleasure of his will towards his children, which is of great use and advantage in the church of Christ. *He who is prudent,* making still a progressive improvement in the same, *shall know* these important subjects, with more mature judgment. As we consider the words as containing a promise, and in connexion therewith, the Lord as the Promiser, then they hold forth the following truth unto us: that such as succeed us, and live to see and perceive the glorious accomplishment of what is spoken of in the Scripture before us, will be admitted into a most glorious and complete understanding of the same; so as to be witnesses of the Lord's mindfulness of his people; of his goodness to them; of his faithfulness, and punctual fulfilment of his promise unto them; so that they will say, *The Lord hath been mindful*

of us: he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel: he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great. Psalm cxv. 12, 13. To close this first particular of our present discourse: it is a part of the Lord's gracious will respecting his people, that such as are made wise in Christ, through the teachings of his word and spirit, shall have an understanding of the methods of the Lord's grace and providence respecting his church; and this shall have its practical influence on their minds. It is hereby these words will be accomplished, *And they shall no more teach every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.* Jer. xxxi. 34. I now proceed to my next particular, which is to shew, that

II. The ways, the acts, and the exercise of the Lord's will, throughout all his dispensations in his people, towards them, and upon them, are all good, and worthy of his glorious Majesty. This is implied in these words: *For the ways of the Lord are right.* The whole of his will in nature, providence, grace, works, judgments, word, and doctrine, are most holy in themselves, and good for his church: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right.*

The nature of God is incomprehensible, essential, immutable: a fountain of immortality, bles-

and glory. The will of God is the rule that he goes forth in his acts, thoughts, covenant, decrees, and designs, towards the works of his hands. He cannot will any thing contrary to his own nature; so that as all his perfections are equally one and the same, the display thereof, be it what it may, must be equally good and holy, it being but the exercise of his will towards the creature; and it must be also equally holy, let the effect thereof towards the creature be as it may. This is the doctrine of the Scriptures throughout the whole of them: *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4. *There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.* 1 Sam. ii. 2. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.* Psalm cxlv. 17. The acts of God must of necessity be holy: such must be the ways of God; so also must be the acts of his own immutable will. No mutation can occur in the will of God. He is always one and the same in his Godhead; in his personalities, as Father, Son, and Spirit: in his love, and everlasting good will, and delight in the persons of his people in Christ: and in his vast purposes of grace towards them. Every act of his, from eternity, in time, and throughout the ages of eternity, must be only a continuation of one

act of his vast mind, conceived within himself before the world was. He says, *I am the Lord, I change not.* Malachi, iii. 6. All the acts of God are good; yet they are beyond our full knowledge and investigation: we can only learn the same from the divine light and teaching of the Holy Ghost. The ways of the Lord, his acts, and the dispensations of the counsel of his will towards his church, are all good; yea, they are worthy of his glorious Majesty; yet it does not follow, that we see and apprehend them fully to be so: no, we do not, at least not at all times and in all the cases and circumstances in which we are placed. Hence arises our discontent; so that in many of us the words of Solomon are realized. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.* Prov. xix. 3. The words in our text, *For the ways of the Lord are right*, most immediately concern the subject which went before it, so that the dealings of the Lord with his backsliding Israel, with the open display of his everlasting mercy, free favour, delight, and gracious acceptance of them, is that which is most distinctly hinted at, and spoken of here: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right.* There is the utmost equity in all the acts of Jehovah's grace; in election, predesti-

nation, covenant purposes, and promises; and in the outgoings of the divine mind to the objects of his delight. As they never cease to be before him, what they are in Christ, and as saved in him, with an everlasting salvation, let their cases and circumstances be what they may; so he, in the immensity of his love to their persons, whom he accepted in the person of his beloved, before all time, will never cease the continuance of the same, during their existence in a time state; and this shall be just exactly in proportion as they are found to need it. We have an amazing evidence of this in viewing the outgoings of God's heart, in what is recorded of his bearing down all the backslidings of Israel. Whilst it is surprising mercy; yet, it is the Lord's, and it is worthy of him. His word in which it is revealed, his ordinances in which he shines forth, are all right; he hath established them. We may well say, *Thy word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.* Psalm cxix. 160. The methods of God's grace, the displays of the same, the overpowering influence of divine grace; the overcoming sin and sinners, in the bringing home the same to a guilty mind, is right in the sight of the Lord. These ways of grace and pardoning mercy are right in the view of a believer. As the Lord will most gloriously shine forth in the display and manifestation of

these acts in the spiritual reign of Christ; then the Psalmist's words will be strikingly fulfilled: *All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.* Psalm cxxxviii. 4, 5. Our everblessed God is rich in goodness; he has opened his vast treasury, and he sets the same before us in the person of Christ, and his all-sufficient mediatorship and mediation. All the riches of God's mercy flow down upon his beloved through Christ, the channel of conveyance, into the hearts of his called people, by the energy and influence of the Holy Ghost. Thus *the ways of the Lord are right.* They are so, as they all redound to the praise and glory of his grace; and most blessedly so, in their benign influences and effects upon the souls and bodies of the saints. The whole of God's providential dispensations towards his church and people, are most holy in themselves, and good for the elect. The Apostle says, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Rom. viii. 28. All the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, as revealed in the everlasting gospel, are most holy in themselves, and good for men. If they become an occasion for stumbling, the unregenerate and wicked men may despise

and abuse them, through their own malice and incredulity; but, it is not because there is any evil in the doctrines of free grace: no, that cannot be; they are altogether godlike and divine; they are as holy in their own nature, and as immutable as God. To cast reflections on any of them, or to charge any sin committed by men to them, as the cause or occasion of it, is to blaspheme God. Yet when sinners are left to themselves, many of them so do; and thus they increase hereby their own ruin and perdition. The glory of the divine nature, the distinct persons in it, Father, Son, and Spirit, their acts and transactions in an everlasting covenant, their interest and relationship to the elect in Christ, their union and communion with them, all shine forth in the truths of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. So that it is most truly said, as here the prophet doth of the same: *The ways of the Lord are right.* For all his dealings with the sons of men are agreeable with the same. Those who are in Christ are under the blessing of Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit. Those who are out of Christ are in their sins, and will remain in them, and under the curse of the broken law, for ever and ever. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right.* And thus I pass on to the next particular of my present subject, which is to shew,

III. *That the ways of the Lord being right,* so the Lord's people have a real delight to walk in them. This is expressed thus: *And the just shall walk in them.* The Lord's people delight in the Lord's ways; and as these ways are so many steps of their having and holding communion with him, it cannot be but they must delight in the same. By the term *just,* here given to the saints of the Most High God, we understand, that all these persons are thus designated because they are believers in Christ Jesus, and are clothed with the robe of his everlasting righteousness. In this they stand before their Heavenly Father, completely righteous; he hath pronounced them righteous in him. They are pronounced justified; which justification is *a justification from all things;* it is a justification unto life. The Apostle says, *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.* Rom. v. 17. It is in the one perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, *that all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory. Their righteouiness is of me saith the Lord.* The Prophet says, *But the just shall live by faith.* Hab. ii. 4. The Apostle quotes these words, reciting them thus, *Now the just shall live by faith.* Heb. x. 38. In the words of our text, the Prophet

and abuse them, through the[illegible] truths incredulity; but, it is not [illegible] *the just* evil in the doctrines of [illegible] spiritual not be; they are altog[illegible] which the they are as holy in[illegible] d to himself, mutable as God. [illegible] *flesh, I live by* them, or to cha[illegible] al. ii. 20. The life them, as the [illegible] e regenerate mind, as pheme God [illegible] upernatural knowledge of selves, m[illegible] rk of our Lord Jesus Christ. crease [illegible] the spiritual exercise of our The gl[illegible] ulties, graces and senses, on our sons[illegible] ious Lord Jesus; all which are men- trar[illegible]; so that they are not to be perceived te[illegible] y the effects they produce. They are wholly [illegible] internal acts of the mind, going out after the [illegible]ord Jesus, in an equal degree with those disco-[illegible]eries of Christ, which the Holy Spirit is pleased to make to the mind, as he reveals Jesus and his glory from the word of truth unto it. *The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.* The one is founded on the other; neither can they exist one without the other. We must first know the ways of the Lord, or we cannot walk in them; nor can we even then, without the Spirit; yet, having the Spirit, the exhortation then is well suited, which is this, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* Gal. v. 25. There is such a suitability in truth to the spiri-

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speaking of the sacred influence that divine truths have on the spiritual mind, says, *and the just shall walk in them*, which, as it implies a spiritual walk, so it includes a life of faith, of which the Apostle speaks, and asserts in regard to himself, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* Gal. ii. 20. The life of faith is produced in the regenerate mind, as the sole fruit of the supernatural knowledge of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It consists in the spiritual exercise of our spiritual faculties, graces and senses, on our most precious Lord Jesus; all which are mental acts; so that they are not to be perceived but by the effects they produce. They are wholly the internal acts of the mind, going out after the Lord Jesus, in an equal degree with those discoveries of Christ, which the Holy Spirit is pleased to make to the mind, as he reveals Jesus and his glory from the word of truth unto it. *The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.* The one is founded on the other; neither can they exist one without the other. We must first know the ways of the Lord, or we cannot walk in them; nor can we even then, without the Spirit; yet, having the Spirit, the exhortation then is well suited, which is this, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* Gal. v. 25. There is such a suitability in truth to the spiri-

tual mind, and in the spiritual mind to truth, that to walk in the light of the knowledge of it, in real communion with the Lord in the belief thereof, in a life of conformity thereunto, and in all the ordinances of the Lord, blameless; this is the true spirit of christianity; and this in the words before us is declared of the just. *And the just shall walk in them.* They are uttered as a promise, and ought, as such, to be understood. I will here again recite the former words of the text, that the full glory of the same may appear, and that the truth of its being a promise may be the more clearly evinced unto the reader. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them.* There are four *shalls* in the text, which must therefore constitute the passage where they are found, a promise; and this may receive confirmation if we consider the whole as belonging, in a very special manner to the church of God amongst the Jews, at their restoration, and the Lord's shining forth towards them, within them, and upon them, in the latter day glory state, when all contained in this chapter shall be gloriously and fully realized unto them; at which season, in a very eminent manner, will be furnished a glorious evidence of the same, by the Lord's people, having a real delight in the Lord,

and expressing the same to an holy excess. They will walk before him in Christ, fully persuaded of his beholding their persons in him, and of their glory and completeness in Jesus; so that their joy and delight in the Lord will have an exuberancy in it. It is not unlikely that the following words of the prophet may be a reflection and shine of the same. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.* Isa. lxi. 10. Such as these, whose joys are thus expressed, cannot but, as the justified and pardoned ones of God, walk in the Lord's way. It will be so, as they will be under the powerful influences of divine and irresistible grace. They will be filled through and through with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. This will be the fulfilment of the following promise, *And I will strengthen them in the Lord: and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.* Zech. chap. x. 12. And thus the just shall walk in the Lord, and in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. They will continue in the same, and thereby be adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Thus I am arrived at the conclusion of my third pro-

posed head of discourse, which comprised these words, *And the just shall walk in them;* that is, the ways of the Lord being right, in nature, providence, and grace; in the free and open revelation of himself in his sacred word; in the ordinances of the same, and in the whole connected therewith. The man in Christ, as enlightened therein, cannot but walk with real delight in the knowledge and acknowledgement of the same. Thus I am brought to my last particular, which is this:

IV. That these things are a stumbling block to the wicked: *But the transgressors shall fall therein;* which is not owing to any defect in the revelation made of these things; they are all clear; they are all plain; they are all equally set before us, one as well as the other, as it respects the record made and given of them in the oracles of truth. What Daniel says may serve fully to elucidate these words: *None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.* Chap. xii. 10. It is not good to be asking and inquiring into the secrets of the Most High, beyond what is set before us, and revealed in the open volume of inspiration. The ways of the Lord exceed the comprehension of our minds. The very execution of God's decrees is a cause of stumbling to the wicked. When the Lord shall finally consume both the eastern and

western anti-christ, by the breath of his mouth, and brightness of his rising, and bring his antient people, and the fulness of the Gentiles, to be one fold under Jesus the one Shepherd; this will be such a miracle in the world, that sinners shall be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked be no more. It is then, as I imagine, the latter part of the words before us, will receive their entire accomplishment. That the transgressors shall fall therein: even in the accomplishment of the Lord's vast designs upon the earth. As I do not want to darken counsel by words without wisdom, I will therefore forbear all further interpretation of the words, leaving them as they are, to the light the Holy Spirit may be pleased to shed on your minds by means of them. May it please Him most graciously to bless the substance of what I have been aiming to declare and set before you, in the foregoing Lectures, so that it may be received into your minds; that you may digest it in your hearts; and so retain the same in your memories, that it may be of benefit and advantage to you in days to come. Then my very end in writing them, as well as in the delivery of them, will be most completely answered. I must leave the whole with the Lord. If his blessing, which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it, follows the same, it will be so; if not, his will be done.

I cannot refrain from adding this, that I am truly thankful I am brought to the end of these papers; and also for being favoured with some communion with the Lord, in compiling these outlines on the chapter. It is therefore with real pleasure I cast the same into the treasury of the church. Let the Lord do with them as seemeth good in his sight. I would beg the prayers of the saints who may read and approve of the things here written, in the words of the Apostle to the saints at Rome. Now, I beseech you brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me, that this my service may be acceptable to the saints. The Lord grant this. Amen.

SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE.

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FINIS.

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